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BEST
FAIRY TALES

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HANS ANDERSEN'S BEST FAIRY TALES

THE TINDER-BOX

ONCE upon a time there came a soldier marching along the road—"one, two! one, two!"—with his knapsack on his back and his sabre by his side. He had been to the wars far away and now he was going home. Striding along the road he met an old witch, hideous and deformed, with her underlip hanging low, almost on to her chest.

"Good evening, soldier," she cried as she caught sight of him. "That's a fine sword of yours, and what a big knapsack! You shall have plenty of money to fill that, I promise you."

"Thank you, old woman," answered the soldier.

"Look at that old tree," said the witch, pointing to one which grew by the wayside. "It's hollow inside and if you climb to the top you'll see a deep hole into which you can let yourself down into the treetrunk. I'll tie a rope around you so that I can pull you up again when you call to me."

"What do you want me to do in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"Why, get the money I told you should be yours," replied the witch. "Listen. When you get right down into the ground you will find yourself in a large hall, lighted with hundreds of lamps. In this hall you will see three doors which you can open with the three keys which you will find hanging there."

If you go into the first room you will find a large chest in the middle of the room. On this chest you will see a huge dog with eyes as big as teacups. You need not fear him for I will give you this blue-checked apron. Spread it out on the floor. Then go up to the dog and put him on to my apron while you open the chest and take out as many pence as you like. If you want silver you must go

into the second room ; but the dog that sits there has eyes as big as mill-stones. You need not mind that for you can set him on my apron while you take all the shillings you want. If you want gold, you will have to go into the third room and you need not fear although the dog which sits there has eyes like round towers. He is very fierce but if you set him on my apron he won't hurt you and you can take all the gold you wish."

" That sounds all right, old witch," said the soldier, " but what am I to give you for all this ? "

" Why," cried the witch, " all I want you to bring me is the old tinder-box which my grandmother forgot when she was down there last."

" Then tie the rope round me and I'll start," said the soldier.

" Here's the rope," replied the witch, " and here's my blue-checked apron."

Then the soldier climbed the tree and let himself down through the trunk into the great hall below where, as the witch had said, hundreds of lamps were burning.

When he opened the first door, there sat the dog with eyes as big as teacups, gazing at him fiercely.

" Well, you're a nice fellow ! " said the soldier, as he set him on the witch's apron and proceeded to fill one of his pockets with pence from the chest. Then he locked the chest again and set the dog back in his place before going into the next room. There he saw the dog with eyes as big as mill-stones.

" You had better not stare at me like that," said the soldier to him, " You might get eye-strain."

He placed the dog on the witch's apron and looked into the chest. When he saw all the silver coins, he threw away the copper ones he had taken, to make room for more shillings, and filled his pockets and his knapsack too with the bright coins.

Then he went into the third room, but there the dog which sat on the chest really was a terrifying sight. His eyes were not only as big as towers but they went round in his head like wheels. But the soldier saluted him bravely and said, " Good evening." He had never seen such a creature before. He looked him in the face, lifted him off the chest on to the witch's apron and opened the



"That sounds all right, old witch." said the soldier.

chest. The sight of all the gold inside made him think of all the wonderful things which he could buy with it and so he threw out all the silver coins which he had taken from the second chest and began to fill up his pockets and his cap and his knapsack and even his boots with the gold ones until he was so heavily laden that he could scarcely walk. At last he thought he had plenty of money and, lifting the dog up to his place on the chest again, he shut the door and called up through the tree, "Now pull me up, witch."

"Have you got the tinder-box?" cried the witch.

"No," said the soldier, with an angry exclamation. "I had forgotten that," and he went back and fetched it.

Then the witch pulled him up through the tree and he climbed down on to the road again with his pockets and knapsack and boots full of gold, as well as his cap.

"What are you going to do with that tinder-box?" he asked.

"That's nothing to do with you," answered the witch, "You've had your money—give me the box."

"Nonsense," replied the soldier. "I want to know what you're going to do with it," and they began to quarrel about the tinder-box until at last the soldier pulled out his sword and cut off the witch's head. Then he tied up all his money in her blue-checked apron and put the tinder-box into his pocket, carrying the apronful of money over his shoulder like a sack as he walked off towards the town.

It was a splendid town and he put up at the best inn and had the best rooms and the finest food he could think of ordering, for now he was rich indeed, though the servant who cleaned his boots thought them a remarkably old pair for such a wealthy man. Next day he bought himself fine clothes to wear and the most expensive boots in the town and listened carefully when the people who served him talked of all the doings in the city and of the King and his pretty daughter, the Princess.

"How can one see the Princess?" asked the soldier; but they answered, "She is not to be seen at all. She lives in a huge metal castle with towers and walls round it and no one but the King himself may go in and out there, for it has been foretold that she would one day marry a common soldier and the King does not like to hear even the idea of such a thing."

"I should like to see her," thought the soldier; but there seemed no way of doing so, though he went about everywhere and gained many friends who thought him a fine cavalier, and gave away many of his shillings in memory of the time when he had little.

At last he found that he had only two of the witch's coins left, so he was obliged to leave the fine rooms in which he had been living and take a little attic in a poorer part of the town.

Here he had to mend for himself and clean his own boots once more, and none of his new friends would climb the many stairs to pay him a visit.

One night, when he had no longer even a candle left, it occurred to him that there was a piece of candle in the tinder-box which he had taken from the witch. He fetched it and as soon as he struck fire to the flint, the door opened and in walked the dog with eyes as big as teacups, whom he had seen in the hall beneath the tree, stood in front of him.

"What are my lord's wishes?" said the dog.

"Aha! that's a splendid tinder-box," cried the soldier, "If I can get all I wish for with it. Bring me some money," he said to the dog, and whisht! away went the dog and was back again with a great bag of pence in his mouth, before the soldier had time to turn round.

Then the soldier guessed what a capital tinder-box this one was, for if he struck it once, the dog who had guarded the copper coins would appear; if he struck it twice, the dog who had sat upon the silver chest would come and if he struck it three times he would see the dog who had guarded the gold coins.

So the soldier moved back again into his fine rooms and wore new clothes and moved amongst his friends again, but still he thought to himself, "I would like to see the Princess they say is so beautiful. Now how can it be done? Where is my tinder-box?"

He struck a light and whisht! in rushed the dog with the eyes like teacups.

"It is certainly late at night," said the soldier, "but I would like to see the Princess for a minute;" and away went the dog.

He was back again in a twinkling with the Princess asleep upon his back and she was so very lovely and so

truly a Princess that the soldier fell in love with her and kissed her swiftly before the dog had time to whisk her off again.

In the morning the Princess told the King and Queen that she had dreamed of a strange adventure on the back of a big dog, and she described her visit to the soldier.

"That would be a fine tale indeed," cried the Queen in great anger; and she told one of her Court ladies to watch by the Princess's bed all the next night to see if it were only a dream or not.

The soldier longed to see the lovely Princess again the next night and the dog fetched her as before; but the Court lady ran after him, put a mark on the door of the house that he entered, and went back again.

But the dog was too clever for her. Seeing the mark on the door of the house, he made a similar mark on all the doors in the town so that next morning the Court lady could not tell where the right door was because all the others had the same mark.

Now, when she told the King and Queen all about this strange happening, the Queen, who was clever as well as great, took her big golden scissors and cut a small piece of silk out of the corner of a bag in which she kept her golden sewing reels. She filled the bag with flour and tied it on to the Princess's back so that a little flour would run out of the corner when she was carried off.

In the night, the dog again fetched the Princess, for the soldier loved her deeply and wished he could have been a Prince so that she might be his Princess; but this time the dog did not notice the little stream of flour which ran out of the bag from the castle to the windows of the soldier's house, and in the morning the King and Queen followed the white trail of flour and had the soldier put in prison. He was to be hanged next morning, they told him. This was not pleasant news to hear, especially as he had left his tinder-box at home.

When the next day dawned, he could see through the prison grating, where he sat, all the people running out of their houses to come and see him hanged, while the drums were beaten and the soldiers were marching to their places.

"Hullo," he cried to a shoemaker's boy as he galloped past so quickly that his slipper fell off and came flying

through the prison yard against the wall. "Hullo, you don't need to hurry so much, they won't begin till I come. If you will run back to where I lived and bring me back my old tinder-box you shall have a golden coin for your trouble ; but you must hurry."

Away ran the boy and soon they came to take the soldier away too ; but just as he stood with one foot on the gallows, he begged to be allowed to make one last small request. All the people were assembled and the King and Queen were there and the Judges and the Council too ; but the King would not say "No" to his request, and the soldier asked if he might light one last pipe of tobacco. Given permission, he pulled out his tinder-box and struck it—one, two, three ! and there stood all three great dogs at once.

"Help me so that I shall not be hanged," cried the soldier to the dogs ; and they fell on the Judges and the Council and hurled them into the air. Then they ran to take the King and Queen too, but the latter cried loudly, "Call away your dogs, little soldier, and you shall be a Prince and marry our daughter the Princess."

All the people shouted "hurrah !" to this, just as if they had not been as pleased a moment ago to see him hanged. Then the soldier struck his tinder-box again and at each stroke one dog disappeared, while the soldiers fetched the Princess from the metal tower to become the wife of the soldier-Prince.

The Princess was very happy to come out of the lonely castle, and the royal wedding lasted a whole week, while the three dogs sat at the far end of the table and kept order amongst the royal household dogs, opening their great eyes wider than ever at all they saw around them.

THE ELEVEN SWANS

ONCE upon a time in a far country there was a King who possessed eleven sons and an only daughter named Lisa, who was very beautiful. Now the eleven sons were princes and each wore a sword by his side and a star upon

his breast when he went to school ; they used diamond pens to write on their golden tablets and could read with or without a book, and by that you may know that they were indeed princes. Their sister, Lisa, had a little glass stool to sit on, and her picture book was worth half a kingdom. These children were indeed fortunate, but alas ! they were not always to remain so.

The King, their father, married again, and his new Queen behaved unkindly to these children, even from the first day after the marriage when there was a great festival, and the children were playing at receiving company. Instead of being given, as they usually were, cakes and sweets to play with, only a dish of sand was given to them by the Queen and they were told to pretend that this was something good to eat.

The week after the wedding, the Queen gave little Lisa to some peasants in the country to be brought up by them, and she soon began telling the King so many false stories about the poor little princes that the King would not have anything to do with them. So the wicked Queen, who, however, could not make the transformation quite as unpleasant as she would have liked to do, then said " Go forth in the form of silent birds into the world, and look to yourselves."

The princes at once took the form of eleven white swans and breathing forth weird cries, flew from the palace above the park and thence into the wild woods.

In the early morning they flew over the peasant's hut where little Lisa slept, flying round and round the roof stretching their graceful necks and flapping their wings, but nobody seeing or hearing them, they flew high up into the sky through the forest which came down right to the seashore, and far away into the great world.

Poor Lisa, standing in the cottage of the peasant, had only the green leaves to play with, for they gave her no other toys. Pricking a hole in a leaf and looking through it at the sun, it seemed to her that she saw her brothers' bright eyes, and when the warm sunbeams were shining on her cheeks, they seemed like her brothers' kisses.

All days seemed exactly alike for Lisa, and when the wind was blowing through the rose-trees on the front of the house, Lisa would whisper to them, " Who is more beauti-

ful than you ? ” But the roses on the bushes would reply, shaking their little heads, “ Lisa ”. When the peasant’s wife was sitting at the door of her cottage reading her hymn book every Sunday, the book was rustled by the wind who said to it, “ Who is more pious than thou ? ” but the book would answer “ Lisa ”, and what the hymn book and the roses said was indeed true.

When Lisa grew up and was fifteen years old, she was recalled to the palace, but when the Queen saw her great beauty, she hated her still more and would have liked to transform her as she had changed her brothers, but she dared not, for the King had desired to see his only daughter.

Next morning when the Queen went to her marble bath, which was adorned with fine pillows and carpets, she took three toads, and having kissed them said to one, “ Rest on the top of Lisa’s head and let her become sleepy and dull like thyself.” To the second she said, “ Be thou on her forehead so that she may be ugly like thee and her father will not know her.” Whilst to the third toad she whispered, “ Put thyself on Lisa’s bosom and let her heart become corrupt and evil and a torture to herself.” Putting the toads into clear water which immediately turned green, the Queen called Lisa and, after she had taken off her clothes, made her go into the bath ; one toad hopped on her hair, one on her forehead and one on her bosom, but Lisa did not notice them, and when she rose up out of the water, three poppies were swimming on the surface.

Had not the toads been poisonous and kissed by a witch, they would have been roses whilst they rested on the head and heart of Lisa, for magic could have no real power over one so pure. The wicked Queen saw this, so she smeared walnut-juice over Lisa’s fine skin, making her quite dark, and greased her beautiful face with a nasty ointment, tangling up her lovely hair, so that nobody after this would recognise her former beauty.

When the King came to see her he was startled and declared, “ This cannot be my daughter ! ” Only the swallows and the hound would have anything to do with her, but alas ! they could not speak in her favour.

Poor Lisa wept, when she could not see her eleven brothers at the palace, and slipped away, wandering the whole day over moorland and fields until finally she

reached the wild forest. She felt so sad, but did not know where to go ; she longed so much to see her brothers once more and determined to search until she found them.

Night came on before she had been long in the forest, which darkened around her, till at length she lost her way. So she laid herself down on some soft moss and saying the evening prayer leaned back against a large tree.

The forest was quiet, the air beautifully mild and the greenish light of countless glow-worms gleamed in the mould and grass around her. Lisa touched one of the tree's branches over her head and brilliant insects dropped down on her as if they were falling stars. During the long night she dreamed of her brothers, fancying that they were all children again playing together, writing with jewelled pens on their golden tablets and looking at the wondrous picture-book, which had cost half a kingdom. They did not make pothooks and hangers on the tablets as they used to in former times, for now they wrote of the strange adventures and bold deeds which they had performed, and everything seemed alive in the picture-book ; the people stepped out from its pages talking to Lisa and her brothers, while the birds sang overhead. As she turned the leaves everything jumped back into its proper place, so that they did not become mixed together.

The sun had already risen high up in the sky before Lisa awakened. She could not see it for the thickly entwined leaves and branches of the great trees of the woodland, but as the sunbeams played over the tree-tops, they appeared like a golden veil swaying back and forth. The air was perfumed and the birds fluttered on to Lisa's shoulders. There was a sound of bubbling water caused by the meeting of several springs to make a pool through whose clear waters could be seen the prettiest little pebbles at the bottom.

Bushes grew thickly around with a wide path between them made by the treading of the deer, and Lisa descended this path to the waterside. It was beautifully clear and bright, and if the leaves and branches had but remained still they would have looked as though they were painted upon the surface, so clearly was each leaf reflected therein, whether in shade or gleaming sunshine.

When Lisa perceived her own face mirrored in the water she was quite shocked, so hideous and brown it appeared,

but after she had dipped her hand in the water and bathed her eyes and forehead her fair skin appeared once more, so she took off her garments and stepped into the clear water, and behold nowhere in the wide world was there any King's daughter as beautiful as she.

She dressed herself once more and coiling her long hair, quenched her thirst at the sparkling spring, drinking from the palm of her hand, and then went on into the forest.



"I saw eleven swans, each with a golden crown on its head."

She again thought of her brothers and put her trust in the great God who, she knew, would never forsake her.

It was surely He who made the wild crab apple trees grow to feed the hungry, and who led her to a tree with branches laden down beneath the weight of the fruit. Having made her midday meal beneath its shady boughs she wandered further on into the dim woodlands.

But as she went deeper into the forest, it became deserted by the birds and so still and solitary that her own footfalls seemed to re-echo loudly and she could hear the dead leaves rustle as she trod. No ray of light pierced the thickly

growing trees, and she sadly laid herself down to sleep in the darkness.

Presently she thought she beheld the branches above her move apart and the Angel of God look down upon her, smiling gently with a thousand seraphs all around him. In the morning, when she awakened, she could not be sure whether it had been only a dream or whether she had been really guarded by angels.

Walking on a little further, she came upon an old woman carrying a basket filled with berries, who gave her some to eat, and Lisa asked her whether she had seen eleven princes riding through the forest.

"Nay," she answered, "but yesterday I saw eleven swans, each with a golden crown on its head, swimming down the stream nearby."

She took Lisa to a cliff, not far away, at whose base flowed a brook. At each side the trees extended their leafy boughs towards one another, and even where the branches were unable to join, the roots had loosened themselves from the soil and hung their interwoven fibres over the brook.

Lisa, bidding the old woman farewell, clambered down the cliff and walked by the brook until she reached the spot where it flowed out into the sea. The vast and beauteous ocean lay before Lisa's gaze, but no boat was to be seen. How could she journey on?

There were countless pebbles on the shore which the waves had worn quite smooth and round. Granite, flint and even glass had been shaped into form, although the sea which had done this was softer than the maiden's little dainty hand.

"It rolls on tirelessly and slowly carves these hard stones," said Lisa. "I will be equally tireless, for you have taught me a lesson, you beautiful bright waves. Some day, I feel sure, I shall come to my dear brothers!"

Lisa noticed on the wet seaweed, eleven large swar feathers; there were drops of water hanging from them, whether tears or dewdrops she did not know, but she gathered them together. Being alone beside the sea she did not mind, for the sea displayed its continual changes to her; many more in an hour or two, than the inland lakes and rivers would present in a whole year.

If a dark cloud passed above it, the sea would seem to say, "I also can darken." When the wind blew, the waves were topped with white spray; but when the winds had lulled, and the clouds were tinted brightly red, then the sea also became rose-coloured; but however quiet and calm it lay, there was ever a gentle heaving beneath the surface like the breathing of a sleeping child.

About sunset, Lisa beheld eleven white swans, each crowned with gold, flying one after the other from the sea to the land like a waving silvery ribbon. Lisa hid herself behind a bush on the cliff, and the swans alighted quite near to her, flapping their great white wings. When the sun set, the swans vanished, and in the place of them there appeared eleven handsome princes, the brothers Lisa was seeking.

She cried aloud, for although the princes were much changed and older, Lisa felt that they must be her brothers; she ran up to them, calling them by their names—and the princes were happy indeed to meet again their sister, who had grown so fair and tall. They all laughed and cried in their joy and told Lisa what their wicked stepmother had done. The eldest of the brothers said to Lisa: "As long as the sun is over us we fly or swim, but at sunset we resume our human form. Towards evening we have to find out a secure resting-place on earth, for if we were flying at sunset, on taking human shape again we should fall. We do not live here, for there is a land quite as beautiful as this on the other side of the ocean, only it is far away and to get there we have to fly over deep seas where there is no island on which we could rest when the night comes. Only one small rock lies between the opposite shores of this sea, and it is so tiny that we have to nestle side by side to find room upon it. There we sleep through the night in our human shape, and if the sea is rough it scatters the foam over us; but even for this resting-place we are very thankful, for otherwise it would not be possible for us to reach our native land.

"We are permitted to visit the home of our father only once a year; we must have two of the longest days for our flight, and can only remain here for eleven days. During our stay we fly over the great forest from which we can see the palace of our father and the church where our

dear mother was buried. When we are here the trees and shrubs seem akin to us, the same wild horses race across the plains, the charcoal burner sings the same airs to which we danced in our childhood, and now you have come to us, beloved little sister. We can stay here but two days longer and then we must fly away to that country which, though so beautiful, is yet not our native land. Yet how can we take you with us, when there is no ship?"

"Is there no way of releasing you?" asked Lisa; and thus they continued talking nearly the whole night through, only sleeping a few hours.

The swans' wings fluttering above her awakened Lisa, for her brothers were again transformed, and they flew round her in great circles.

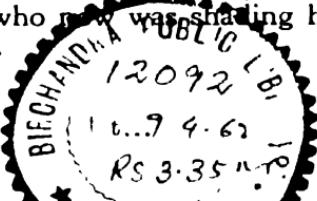
At last they flew away, but one of them—the youngest—remained behind, laying his head on her lap while she stroked his long white wings. And thus they spent the rest of the day together. Just before nightfall the others came back and at sunset stood upon the ground in human form.

"We shall fly away to-morrow and must not return for a year, but we cannot leave you here," said one. "Have you the courage to come with us? My arm is quite strong enough to bear you in the forest; surely we ought to have sufficient strength to support you on our wings?"

"Yes," said Lisa, "I will go with you."

So they spent the night in making from the supple willow bark and strong rushes a stoutly woven mat. Lisa lay upon this and when the brothers were again transformed at sunrise they seized the mat with their beaks and flew up into the clouds with their little sister still sleeping. As the hot sunrays were falling on her face, one of the swans flew up overhead and cast a cooling shade with his broad wings.

When Lisa awoke, they were far away from land. It seemed so strange to her travelling through the air and over the broad sea, that she thought she was still dreaming. There was a cluster of bright berries and a handful of sweet roots by her side. These had been gathered by her youngest brother, and she thanked him with a smile, for she felt sure that he was the swan who now was shading her from the glare with his wings.



They flew very high and when they saw the first ship, it appeared like a mere seagull on the water. There was a large cloud looking like a big mountain behind Lisa, and on it were giant shadows, her own and her eleven brothers, forming a wonderful picture, finer than any she had ever seen. But when the sun rose higher in the heavens, the cloud was left behind and the fleeting pictures disappeared.

The swans flew continuously the whole day making a whirring noise and flying more slowly than before, for now they were carrying their sister. As evening came on, there was a heavy storm gathering and Lisa anxiously watched the sun, now nearly setting ; but the little rock was not yet to be seen, and it appeared to her that her brothers were using their wings with greater difficulty than before. If her brothers did not arrive at the rock in time, alas ! it would be her fault, and they would become human beings, and when this happened they would fall into the sea and be drowned. She prayed to God, but the black clouds were getting nearer, the violent gusts of wind announced the coming of the storm, and the clouds appeared to rest on an immense upright wave, which was approaching rapidly, while one bright flash of lightning quickly followed the other.

The sun was now on the edge of the sea, and poor Lisa's heart beat fast ; then the swans flew down so swiftly that she feared she would fall ; but again they hovered. The sun was now half-way down beneath the sea's edge, and now, at last, she saw the little rock beneath her ; it appeared like the head of a seal when he lifts it from the water.

As Lisa's feet touched the hard surface of the rock, like the last spark on a piece of burning paper, the sun disappeared from sight. Arm in arm her brothers stood around her—there was only just enough room for them, standing close together—while the sea beat wildly against the rock, casting its foam over them. The sky was a continuous blaze with the never ceasing flashes of lightning and, while peal upon peal of heavy thunder rolled, Lisa and her brothers held fast to each other. They sang a psalm of thanksgiving and renewed their courage and trust.

The air became pure and still at daybreak and, when the sun was well risen, Lisa and the swans rose from the rock.

The waves were becoming higher and higher and, when they looked upon the sea from the clouds, it appeared blackish green with white foam; it almost seemed as if thousands of swans were floating on the water. Later in the day Lisa saw floating in the air what seemed like a land of mountains, with glaciers between them, and in the middle of this a palace a full mile long with columns and palm trees and immense flowers as large as mill-wheels.

She asked the swans if this was the country to which they were going, but they shook their heads; for what she was seeing was but the beautiful air-castle of the fairy Morgana, which no human being could enter. Even while Lisa was bending her gaze upon the vision, the mountains, trees and castle all disappeared and twelve churches with pointed windows and high towers stood in their place; she thought she even heard the organ playing, but it really was only the murmuring of the sea. She seemed quite close when these changed into a large fleet of ships and then again into a mist floating on the sea. A constant variety of things appeared before her eyes before the actual land, to which they were going, came into sight. Blue mountains, cedar woods, towns and castles came into view, and before sunset Lisa was sitting down before a large cavern around which young slender creeping plants were so thickly twined that it seemed covered with brightly woven carpets.

"Now we'll see what you will dream about to-night," said the youngest brother as he led her to the chamber which was to be her bedroom.

"Would that I could dream in what way you can be released from the spell," replied Lisa, and this idea completely occupied her thoughts. She prayed to God for his assistance, and even in her dreams continued her prayers, and in her sleep it seemed to her that she was again in the air flying towards the castle of the fairy Morgana, who came to meet her, beautiful and radiant, and yet withal she seemed very like the old woman in the forest who had given her the berries and had told her about the swans with the golden crowns.

"Thou canst release thy brothers if thou hast enough patience and courage," said the fairy. "The water is softer than thine own dainty hands and yet it can shape the

hardest stones to its will ; but then it has no pain to feel as thou wouldest have ; it has no heart to suffer the grief and anxiety thy heart would feel. See the stinging nettles which I have now in my hand ! There are many like these in the cave in which thou art sleeping, but remember that it is only those that grow there or on the graves in the churchyard which are of any use. Thou shouldst pluck them even though they sting thy hand, then thou must trample them well with thy feet until thou canst make yarn from them, and thou must weave eleven shirts with long sleeves from this yarn, and when made, if thou throwest them over the wild swans, the spell will be broken.

“ But mind this, from the time that thou dost commence this work until thou hast completed it, even although it may take years, thou must not speak a word, for the first syllable which comes from thy lips will go like a dagger into the hearts of thy brothers ; on your silence depends their life. Remember this.”

The fairy then touched the hand of Lisa with a nettle, which made it burn like fire, and she awoke.

It was now daylight and a nettle like the one she had seen in her dream lay beside her. She thanked God on her knees, and went from the cave to begin her work. With her own tender hands she plucked the stinging nettles, which burned blisters on her arms and fingers, but she willingly bore the pain, trusting to release her brothers, and trampled on the nettles with her naked feet, and from them spun some green yarn.

When her brothers came at sunset they were frightened by the silence of their sister, thinking it must be due to some fresh spell of their wicked stepmother, but when they saw her blistered hands they understood what their good Lisa was trying to do for their sakes. The youngest brother wept seeing the blisters, but when his tears fell on them they disappeared and Lisa felt no more pain from them.

She spent the whole night at her work, for she would not rest until she could release her brothers. The next day she sat all alone, for the swans had flown away, but never had time passed so quickly for her ; one shirt was now ready, and she went on to make another.

A hunting horn resounded among the hills and Lisa was frightened. She heard the hounds barking as the noise came nearer and nearer. At last, in great fear, she gathered up the nettles, bound them together into a bundle, carried it into the cave and sat down on it.

A great dog sprang from the bushes and two others followed, all barking loudly, and then ran back and forth. Soon the hunters stood in front of the cave; and the handsomest among them was actually the King of the country. He went up to Lisa; never had he seen a more beautiful maid.

"How camest thou here, beautiful child?" he said. Lisa shook her head for she dared not speak, since saying a word would have cost the life of her brothers, and she put her hands under her apron so that the King should not see how much she was suffering.

"Come with me," said the King "you cannot be allowed to stay here. If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will dress you in silk and velvet, and on your head shall be placed a golden crown, and you shall live in my palace."

Saying which, he lifted her upon his horse; but she was weeping and wringing her hands, and the King said, "You will thank me for this some day, for I am only desiring your happiness." Then he rode away over the mountains and valleys, holding her in front upon his horse, and the other hunters followed.

At sunset the magnificent capital city of the Kingdom with its churches and fine buildings, was before them, and the King took Lisa into the beautiful palace where, in a great marble hall, lovely fountains were playing, and on the walls and ceilings most beautiful pictures were painted.

But Lisa cared nothing for this splendour; she mourned in silence and wept, even when the serving women dressed her in royal robes and put costly pearls in her hair and placed soft gloves on her blistered hands.

Now that she was fully dressed and stood in her splendid attire, she was so dazzlingly beautiful that all the courtiers bowed low before her, the King then took her for his bride even though the Archbishop shook his head doubtfully, whispering that the lovely lady of the woods must surely be a witch who had infatuated the King.

But the King would not listen, and ordered that music should be played, while a sumptuous banquet was served and the bride was surrounded by lovely dancing maidens. Lisa was led into the gardens full of fragrant flowers and through the beautiful halls of the palace, but there was not a smile on her lips nor any glad light in her eyes.

The King opened a small room next to her bedroom which was hung with costly green tapestry, and quite resembled the cave in which she was found, and on the carpet lay the bundle of yarn which she had spun from the nettles, and on the wall hung the shirt she had finished.

"Here," said the King, "you may dream of the place where I found you; here also is the kind of work you were doing; perhaps in all this splendour it may sometimes give you pleasure to fancy yourself there again."

When Lisa saw what was so necessary to her, the blood came back to her cheeks and she smiled at the King—for she now trusted that her brothers would be released from the spell—and she kissed his hand and the King pressed her to his heart. He now commanded that the bells of the churches should be rung to announce his wedding to the lovely dumb lady of the woods who was to be Queen of the land.

Although the Archbishop said evil words to the King, it made no impression on him; the marriage was solemnized and the Archbishop himself had to put the crown on the Queen's head. In his rage he pushed down the narrow edge of the crown so tightly on her forehead that it hurt her, but her sorrow for her brothers hurt so much more that she took no heed of the pain. She remained silent, for a single word would have killed her brothers; but her eyes shone with deep love for the good, handsome King who had tried so hard to make her happy, and day by day she grew more warmly attached to him.

If only she were able to confide her sorrows to him! But she was compelled to remain silent until her work was completed. For this she stole away every night, going into the little room that was like the former cavern; there she worked at the shirts until she had begun the seventh, when she found this was the end of her yarn.

The fairy had told her that the nettles she needed grew

also in the churchyard ; but she must gather them herself. How could she get them ?

" What is the pain in my fingers compared to the pain in my heart for my brothers ! " she thought. " I must go into the churchyard ; the good God will protect me."

One moonlight night, although fearful that she was about to do something wrong, she crept into the garden and on along the lonely road until she reached the churchyard.

She saw, sitting on one of the wide tombstones, several hideous witches. Lisa was obliged to pass close by and the witches cast their baleful eyes on her but, repeating her prayers, she gathered the stinging nettles, taking them back with her to the palace. She had been seen by only one other person, but that was the Archbishop, for he was awake when others were sleeping ; so now he felt sure that all was not quite right about the Queen. She must surely be a witch who had infatuated the King and his people by her enchantments.

In the Confessional he informed the King of what he had seen and what he feared, but when the evil words came from his lips, the images of the Saints around shook their heads as if to say, " It is untrue, Lisa is innocent." The Archbishop, however, would have it that this was a testimony against Lisa, for the holy images shook their heads because of her sins.

Tears rolled down the King's cheeks ; he returned home doubtful, and pretended to be asleep that night, and saw that Lisa rose from her bed each night, and each time he followed her secretly until she had entered her little room.

Lisa noticed that his looks towards her became darker and darker every day, but could not divine the cause ; she was deeply pained, but what would she not suffer for her brothers ?

Her bitter tears ran on to the royal velvet, looking like bright diamonds, but all who saw the splendour around her would have liked to have been in her place.

Her work was now nearly finished ; only one more shirt was wanted, but yarn was again lacking and she had not a nettle left. Once more, but only this time, would she have to go to the graveyard to obtain a few handfuls. She was afraid of the lonely walk and the horrible witches, but her resolution was equally firm through her great trust in God.

When Lisa went, she was followed by the King and Archbishop. They saw her disappear at the churchyard door, and also saw the witches sitting on the tombstones, just as Lisa had seen them before, and the King turned away sadly, for he now believed that she who had rested her head on his bosom was one of the witches. "Let the people judge her," said the King. She was forthwith tried and condemned by the people to be burned.

They dragged her from the King's beautiful apartments, and cast her into a damp dark prison with the wind whistling through the grated window. Instead of the velvet and silk, which she had been wearing, they now gave her, for a pillow, the bundle of nettles which she had gathered. The shirts which she had woven had to be both mattress and counterpane; but they could have given her nothing that was of so much value to her and, praying earnestly to God, she went on with her good work.

Boys sang evil songs about her in front of the prison, and no one gave her one word of comfort or love.

Just before evening she heard the rustling of a swan's wings at the grating. It was her youngest brother who had found his sister, and she sobbed aloud in her joy, for she knew that her work was finished, even if the coming night was to be her last.

The Archbishop came to spend the last hour with her as he had promised the King, but she shook her head and with her eyes and gesture entreated him to go, for she must finish her work completely that night so that all her suffering and sleepless nights would not be in vain.

The Archbishop went away muttering angry words; but Lisa, knowing herself to be perfectly innocent, went on with her work.

Little mice went diligently about and dragged the nettles to her feet, trying to help her, and a thrush outside the bars of the window sang as cheerily as he could so that Lisa should not lose courage.

In the half light, shortly before sunrise, Lisa's eleven brothers went to the palace gates and requested an audience of the King, but they were told that this could not be, for the King was asleep and no one dare wake him.

They entreated and threatened the guards, and at last the King himself came to know what was the matter. At

that moment, the sun rose, and the brothers could not now be seen ; there were only eleven white swans which flew away from the palace.

The people came forth from the city, wishing to see the witch burnt. Lisa was brought from prison in a horse-drawn cart. A coarse sackcloth dress had been placed over her, while her beautiful long hair hung over her shoulders. Her face was deadly pale and her lips moved gently while her fingers wove the green yarn ; even on her way to a cruel death, she would not give up her work. The ten shirts were at her feet and she was now completing the last.

The rabble insulted her. "Look at the witch ! She has not got a hymn book in her hand, she sits there with only her hocus-pocus. Take it away from her and tear it into a thousand pieces." And they all crowded about her trying to snatch away the shirts ; but eleven white swans came flying to the cart, settling all round Lisa and flapping their wings.

The crowd terrified, gave way. "It is a sign from Heaven," said some. "She must be innocent !" But they dared not say it aloud.

The Sheriff then took her by the hand—whereupon, in a moment, she threw the shirts over the swans and eleven handsome princes were there instead. The youngest, however, had only one arm, for one sleeve was wanting in his shirt ; but he had one wing instead.

"At last," said Lisa, "I can speak. I am innocent "

And the people who had seen what had taken place looked upon her as a Saint and bowed down before her. But Lisa sank unconscious in her brothers' arms ; for the fear, suspense and grief had quite exhausted her.

"She is indeed innocent," said the eldest brother, and he related the wonderful history. While he spoke, a delicious perfume as from millions of roses spread around, for each piece of wood fire on which Lisa was to have been burnt as a witch, was sending forth branches of red roses around Lisa ; and over all the other roses bloomed a white flower of dazzling beauty, bright as a star, which the King plucked and placed on Lisa's breast.

Upon this, Lisa awakened from her swoon with peace and gladness in her heart. The church bells rang out of their

own accord and as the King, his Queen and the eleven Princes rode triumphantly to the Palace, the birds flocked round in thousands and formed such a gorgeous procession that the like had never been seen before.

Back in the Palace, Lisa made the second sleeve for the shirt of her youngest brother, so that his arm was restored. And all her brothers swore that they would never return to their father's country but rather stay with their beloved sister—who had bravely suffered so much to break the spell which had lain on them so long—and the King who adored her.

So they all lived happily ever after !

GREAT CLAUS AND LITTLE CLAUS

ONCE upon a time there dwelt two men of one name in the same village ; the one owned four horses, while the other had but one, so the neighbours, in order to tell the difference between them, called the owner of the four horses, "Great Claus", while he who had but one, was named, "Little Claus".

During the whole of the week, Little Claus was obliged to plough for Great Claus, and even to give him the loan of his one horse, and in return for this, Great Claus would lend him his four horses for one day of the week, and even this day was a Sunday.

Hurrah ! How proud Little Claus was then, flourishing his whip above the five horses, for he considered that all five belonged to him for that particular day. The sun shone very brightly, and the church bells rang ; the people walked to the church dressed in their best, and in passing, saw Little Claus driving his five horses, and so happy was he, that he cracked his whip again and again, calling out, " Hurrah, Hip, Hurrah ! five wonderful horses, and they all belong to me ! "

" You are not to say that ! " called out Great Claus. " Only one horse belongs to you, and you know that quite well."

When another group of churchgoers came walking by,

Little Claus quite forgot how he had been forbidden to say so, and called out again, "Hip, Hip, Hurrah! five beautiful horses, and they are all mine!"

"Did I not tell you to keep quiet?" said Great Claus, now very angry. "If you repeat that, I shall knock your horse on the head and kill him and that will stop your bragging about your five fine horses."

"I'll never say it again!" exclaimed Little Claus, quite meaning to keep his word, but soon, some more people coming by and nodding a kindly "Good morning," he was so pleased that he could not restrain himself, for it seemed so wonderful to him to have five fine horses to plough his bit of land, and, flourishing his whip aloft, he called, "Hip, Hip, Hurrah! five fine horses, and they all belong to me!"

"I will cure you!" said Great Claus, full of wrath; and picking up a large stone, he hurled it at the head of Little Claus' one horse, and so great was the weight of the stone, that the poor horse was killed.

"And now I have no horses whatever!" said Little Claus, and he began to shed tears.

When at last he recovered himself, he began to strip the skin off his dead horse, and after drying it well in the air, he put it into a sack, and hoisted the sack upon his back. He then started off for the nearest town, trusting to sell the skin. It was a long journey, and the road passed through a great thickly grown wood. There came a violent storm. The rain clouds, and the dark trees blown to and fro by the wind, so bemused poor Little Claus, that he at last lost his way, and before he could find it again it was night and quite dark, and he could not get home again or proceed to the town. But at a little distance he noticed a large farmhouse, and, although the window shutters were fastened, Little Claus could see lights glimmering through the cracks.

"I might get shelter from the storm here," said he, so he went up to the farm and knocked on the door. The wife of the farmer answered, but after hearing what he wanted, refused, and told him he must go somewhere else; he could not come into her house; her husband was away from home, and she would not entertain strangers in his absence.

"Well, then, I suppose I shall have to sleep outside, even in such a stormy night," said Little Claus, and the farmer's wife slammed the door against him.

There was a haystack close by, and a tiny shed with a flat, straw roof between it and the farm.

"I'll climb up there!" Little Claus told himself when he noticed this. "It ought to make an excellent bed for me, only I trust that stork up there will not fly down and bite my legs," for a stork had made its nest above, and stood guarding it as wide-awake as possible, although it was night-time.

Little Claus climbed up on the shed and twisted and turned around until he had succeeded in making himself a comfortable bed. The window shutters between the pent-house and the farmhouse did not close well at the top, and, from his lofty perch, he could see all that was happening in the room.

He saw a big table on which were set out bread and wine, roast meat, and some fried fish. The farmer's wife and the sexton were at the table, and they were all alone. The farmer's wife was filling his glass of wine, while the sexton was eagerly giving himself a good helping of fish.

"It is really too bad of them to keep it all to themselves!" said Little Claus. "If they would only give me just a little!" stretching his head as close to the window as possible. And then he saw a most beautiful cake as well! It was quite a banquet.

Soon he heard the beat of hoofs on the road, drawing near. It was the farmer himself returning. Now this farmer was a thoroughly kindhearted fellow, although he had one peculiarity—he could not bear the sight of a sexton; the thought of one almost drove him crazy.

The sexton of the town nearby was first ousin to his wife, and they were old friends and playfellows, so, this evening, not expecting the farmer to return, he had come to visit his cousin, and the good woman, quite glad to see him, had laid out for him the very best things in her cupboard. But even while they were sitting so contentedly, there came the sound of the farmer's horse; both jumped up, the good-wife telling the sexton to hide himself in a big chest that was in the corner. This he did, for he was aware that the farmer would become almost crazy, if he found the sexton there.

The farmer's wife then bustled about to conceal the wine and dishes within the oven, lest the husband should notice them laid out on the table and ask her why she had been making ready such a feast.

"Oh dear, Oh dear!" lamented Little Claus, from his place up on the shed, when he saw the eatables all put away.

"Is anyone up there?" the farmer called out, for he had heard the voice, and, looking up, saw Little Claus. "Why do you lie there? Come inside the house with me!"

Little Claus related how he had lost his way during the storm and asked him if the farmer would shelter him for the night.

"Indeed I will," said the kindly man. "Come in at once and have some food."

The woman greeted them with every appearance of welcome, spread a cloth on one end of the long table and placed on it a large bowl of porridge. The farmer ate with a good appetite, but Little Claus was unable to eat for thinking of the fine roast meat, the fish, the wine and the rich cake, which he knew were hidden away in the oven.

He placed the sack containing the horse's hide beneath the table and now, as he could not enjoy the oatmeal porridge, began treading upon the sack at his feet until the dry skin crackled loudly.

"Hush," murmured Little Claus as though talking to the sack, at the same time treading on the sack again, so as to make it crackle louder than ever.

"What's that you have in the sack?" said the farmer.

"Oh, I have a wizard there," said Little Claus, "he tells me we need not be eating porridge for he has conjured up a feast of roast beef, fish and cake for us, and we shall find it in the oven."

"A wizard, say you?" cried the farmer, and he rose in a great hurry to open the oven and see whether the wizard had spoken the truth.

There surely enough were the meat and fish and cake the wizard had been true to his word.

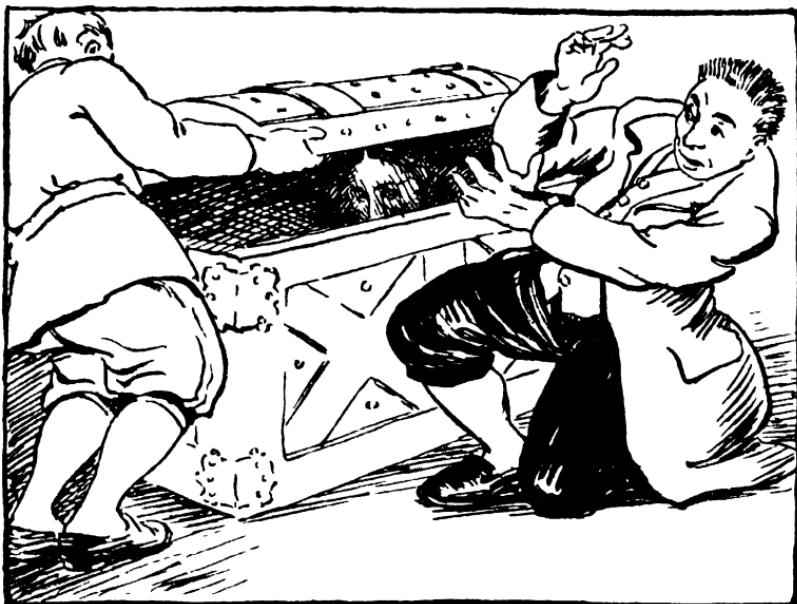
The farmer's wife dared not say a word in explanation; she was as much confused as her husband, but taking the food from the oven she set it on the table, and the farmer

and his visitor commenced to eat the good things before them heartily.

Very soon Little Claus trod on his sack once more and caused the hide to creak.

"What is your wizard saying now?" enquired the farmer.

"He tells me that he has conjured up three bottles of wine for us to drink, and that we shall find them in the



"Ugh!" he exclaimed, and started back in a fright.

corner of the oven." Then the wife was compelled to bring forth the wine which she had hidden, and the farmer, filling his glass, began to reflect that it would be a good thing to possess such a clever wizard as this.

"An excellent wizard, this one of 'ours,'" said the farmer at length. "I wish I could see him. Do you think he will let me?"

"Why of course," replied Little Claus, "he will do whatever I ask him. Will you not?" he added, trampling on his sack. "Did you hear him answer 'Yes'?" But I

must tell you that he will look rather dark and not very comely ; it is hardly worth your while to see him."

" I am not afraid. How will he appear ? "

" Well, he looks very much like a sexton."

" A sexton ! " exclaimed the farmer, " that is indeed a pity for I greatly dislike to see a sexton, but never mind for I shall know that he is not really a sexton, but only your wizard, so I shall not mind so much. I have courage enough, still don't let him come too close to me ! "

" I'll tell my wizard how you feel," replied Little Claus, and again he made the hide go " Creak ! Creak," and held his ear down, as if he were listening.

" What is he saying now ? "

" He tells me that he will conjure himself into that chest in the corner ; you need only lift the lid and you can see him, but be careful to close the lid again quickly."

" Will you help me to raise the lid, for it is somewhat heavy ? " said the farmer as he went over to the chest, where his wife had hidden the sexton, who was sitting all huddled up, scarcely daring to breathe for fear of discovery.

The farmer slowly lifted the lid and peered beneath it. " Ugh ! " he exclaimed, and started back in a fright. " Oh dear ! I saw him ! he appeared just like the sexton in our town ! How dreadful ! "

He sat down again at the table however and began to drink one glass of wine after another in order to recover from the sight. The wine quickly restored his lost courage. Neither the farmer nor his visitor wished to go to bed, so they sat together drinking and chatting far into the night.

" Have you ever seen your wizard before ? " asked the farmer.

" No, indeed," replied Little Claus, " I never thought of asking him to let me see him until you suggested it. He knows he is not good-looking and does not wish to intrude in company. He speaks to me, and I answer him. Surely that is quite enough ! "

" Certainly, it is," agreed the farmer hastily, adding after a pause, " You may as well know that I should like to buy your wizard. Will you sell him to me ? Name your price ! I don't mind giving you even a bushel of silver for him ! "

" How can you suggest such a thing," cried Little Claus,

" such a good and valuable servant, I could not think of parting with him. He is worth ten times his weight in gold."

" I can't give you gold, but I really should like to have him, only he must not show his ugly face again to me."

" There is little fear of that," rejoined Little Claus. " Well, as you have been good enough to shelter me to-night, I think I ought not to refuse your request. I will sell you my wizard for a bushel of silver, but the bushel *must* be brimful."

" Indeed it shall," said the farmer, " and you shall have the chest over there to complete the bargain. I would rather it did not stay in the house any longer, for it would always remind me of the sexton's horrid face that I saw within it."

So the bargain was made and Little Claus gave the farmer his sack with the horse's hide in it and carried away in its stead a bushel of silver. The farmer besides gave Little Claus a wheel-barrow in which to carry home both chest and money.

Little Claus said farewell and took away the wheel-barrow with the poor sexton still lying hidden in the chest.

A deep wide river flowed on the other side of the wood, and here the current was so strong that none could swim against it, so a bridge had recently been built across. Little Claus passed half way over this bridge and halting midway said loudly, so that the man in the chest should hear him, " Now what use can this old worn-out chest ever be to me. It is as heavy as though it were full of stones and wearies me to wheel it. I'll throw it into the river and it may float home to me or go wherever it pleases for all I care."

So he raised the chest as if he were about to cast it into the water.

" Oh ! please don't do that, let me out first," called the sexton from inside the chest.

" What," cried Little Claus, " Is then the chest bewitched ? In that case the sooner it is out of my hands the better ! "

" No, no," exclaimed the sexton, " pray let me out and I will give you another bushel of silver."

"Ah, that's quite a different matter," answered Little Claus, whereupon he put down the chest and raised the lid. Out came the sexton much to his relief. Kicking the empty chest into the river he took Little Claus to his house and gave him the bushel of silver as he had promised.

Little Claus now owned a barrow-full of silver. "I have indeed been highly paid for my horse's hide," quoth he to himself when he went into his own room and had turned out all his silver in a pile on the floor. "I am afraid Great Claus will be annoyed when he discovers how wealthy I have become through my horse's hide."

Then he sent a little boy to borrow a measure from Great Claus.

"What does he want a measure for?" wondered Great Claus, and he artfully rubbed some soft clay on the bottom of the measure knowing that a little of what ever was to be measured would stick to the clay. When the measure was sent back to him he found three silver coins clinging to the bottom."

"A fine thing, indeed," said Great Claus in astonishment, and off he went at once to Little Claus' house.

"How did you get so much money?" he shouted.

"I got it for my horse's hide which I sold yesterday," was the rejoinder.

"Indeed," said Great Claus, "are horse's hides so valuable as that? I should not have thought it."

He went quickly home and seizing an axe he killed all his four horses, after which he skinned them and drove into the town with the hides. "Hides! Hides! who will buy hides?" he cried while passing through the streets. The tanners and shoemakers came up to him asking his price.

"A bushel of silver for each of them," said Great Claus.

"You are crazy," said they, "we don't count our silver by the bushel."

"Hides! New hides, who will buy new hides," he called again, but still to everyone who asked the price, he replied, "A bushel of silver."

"The rogue is trying to fool us," said one of the crowd angrily.

"Hides! New hides!" cried the people mocking him.

"Out of the town with the fool or he shall have no hide left on his own back."

So Great Claus was hustled and pushed out of the town, and he went home in great anger.

"Little Claus shall pay bitterly for this," he muttered.

Soon after nightfall, he went to Little Claus' cottage, and seizing him, hastily thrust him into the sack which he had brought, saying, "I will drown you, and that will stop you from telling tales." So he carried him off.

But he had a long distance to walk before reaching the water, and he found Little Claus no light burden. On his way he passed a church, and amongst the people going in to the service, he saw one with whom he wished to speak.

So he put the sack down at the side of the road, well-hidden. "No one will see or hear him now, the folk are all in church." So he went into the porch of the church.

"Oh dear me!" groaned Little Claus, as he twisted and turned in a vain attempt to loosen the string of the sack.

At that moment, an old drover passed along, his strong staff was in his hand, but he was tired. Driving a big herd of cows and oxen, there were many more than such a feeble man could well manage. One of the cattle pushed against the sack, overturning it and Little Claus cried out "Help me, help me, help me out of this sack."

"Why there is a man in this sack!" said the old man bending down with some difficulty to loosen the string, "The ox did not harm you I hope?"

But the way Little Claus jumped out of the sack showed that he was not harmed, and he began to root up the dead trunk of a small tree near the roadside, which he pushed into the sack and tied the string, placing it exactly as Great Claus had left it.

"I would be glad if you would drive these cattle home for me to the village," said the old man, "I am so tired and I should like to go to church."

"Certainly I will help you; for you have helped me," answered Little Claus taking the whip from the drover's hand and following the herd in his place.

Before long Great Claus hurried back and picking up the sack threw it across his shoulders again saying to himself: "The burden does not seem so heavy now. It does one good to rest a little while." So he walked on

towards the river, where flinging the sack into the water, he cried, "Now indeed you will not cheat me again, Little Claus." He then went home, but on reaching a place where several roads met, he came upon Little Claus driving the herd of cattle.

"What?" cried Great Claus, "Can it be you? I thought I drowned you in a sack."

"Ah!" rejoined Little Claus, "I know you intended to drown me when you flung me into the river half-an-hour ago."

"How did you get these fine cattle?" said Great Claus, overcome with surprise and gazing approvingly at the fine animals.

"Well, these are sea-cattle and I am quite grateful to you for trying to drown me, for it is had made me wealthier than before. I was very frightened while I was in the sack, and there were such noises in my ears when you threw me over the bridge into the cold water. I sank immediately to the bottom, but I was unhurt, for I fell upon smooth soft grass. The sack was opened at once, and there before me was a beautiful maiden, all in white, with a green wreath upon her wet hair. She took my hand and said, 'Art thou Little Claus? There are some cattle of thine here, and further along the road a bigger herd is grazing, which I will give thee also.' Thereupon I understood that the river is a kind of highway for the people in the sea and that they walk and drive on it far inland to where the river first rises and then return to the sea again. Nowhere could it be more beautiful than it is on the bed of the river, with its bright flowers and green grass and the fishes swimming and darting back and forth around me, just as the birds flit to and fro in the air above. There I saw many brightly clad sea-folk and such great herds of fine cattle grazing in the pastures set round with hedges."

"Why then did you hasten up again?" asked Great Claus. "I wouldn't! Not I; when it was so agreeable below there!"

"Ah!" said Little Claus, "that was a clever idea of mine. I told you that the sea-maiden said that a mile along the way, by which she meant the river way as a sea-lady could not come up here to our highways, there

was another herd of cattle for me, still larger than this one. But I remembered that the river winds and turns a great deal so that I should save myself and the cattle at least half-a-mile by cutting across the land. So you see, here I am and soon I shall find my other sea-cattle."

"You are indeed a fortunate fellow," said Great Claus. "Do you think it possible for me to be given some of these cattle if I went below to the bed of the river?"

"How do I know?" answered Little Claus.

"Ah! you mean to keep all the fine cattle to yourself, do you?" said Great Claus. "Now you carry me to the river-side and throw me over or I'll kill you with my big knife. One or the other."

"Now do not be so hasty," quoth Little Claus. "I could not carry you in a sack to the river-side, you are much too heavy, but if you walk there and get into the sack yourself, I will then throw the sack over if you wish it."

"Mind! if, when I get to the river-bed, I do not get any cattle I'll kill you when I return," said Great Claus; but Little Claus offered no objection to this plan.

Together they walked towards the river, and when the thirsty cattle perceived the water, they broke into a gallop, jostling against each other in their eagerness to be the first to drink.

"Just see," said Little Claus, "how my cattle long to get back again to the river-bed."

"No doubt they do," replied Great Claus, "but you must help me into the river first."

Great Claus then got into the large sack, which lay over the back of one of the cattle. "Now," said Great Claus, "put a big stone in with me or perhaps I may not sink to the bottom."

"Small fear of that," said Little Claus, but he placed a heavy stone in the sack nevertheless, and having fastened the string he thrust the sack into the river.

Splash! down it sank right to the very bottom.

"I greatly fear he will not get his sea-cattle," quoth Little Claus, quietly driving his herd back to the village.

THE UGLY DUCKLING

ONCE upon a time, and it was summer time and really beautiful in the country, the wheat was yellow and the oats were green, the hay was all stacked in the meadows, and the stork, parading about on his long red legs, went on talking in Egyptian, a language his mother had taught him.

Thick woods were around the fields and meadows, and there was a deep lake in the middle of the woods. Yes, now it was indeed lovely in the country ; the sunshine was falling warmly on an old mansion with deep canals all round it and from the walls to the water's edge the burdock leaves grew so tall that children could stand amongst them without being seen.

This place was very wild in the thicker part of the woods and therefore a duck had chosen to make her nest there. She was sitting on her eggs, although her first pleasure in them was almost gone, because she had been there so long without visitors, other ducks preferring to swim among the burdocks in the canals to gossiping with her.

At length the eggs began cracking away, one by one. "Tchick", "tchick" ! The eggs were now alive and one little head appeared after another. "Quack, Quack !" said the duck, and all got out as well as they could. They peeped from under the green leaves, and since green is good for the eyes, the mother duck let them look as long as they liked.

"How large the world is," said the little ducks, for they found their present condition quite different from their cramped position within the eggshells. "Do you think that this is the whole of the world ?" said the mother, "It goes far beyond the end of the garden, but I have never been there. Now are you all here ?" She got up. "I have not got all of you now, the biggest egg is still here. How much longer is this to last ? I am so tired of it." So she sat down once more.

"How are you feeling to-day ?" said an old duck who had come to visit her.

"This last egg is keeping me such a time," said the mother duck. "It still has not broken, but you ought to see the others, they really are the prettiest ducklings I have ever seen and quite resemble their father: he is a worthless fellow who has not been to see me at all."

"Let me look at the egg which has not broken," said the old duck, "I think it may be a turkey's egg. I was caught in that way once, and had great trouble with the chicks, who were all afraid of the water, and I could not make them go in. I talked and scolded, but it was no good, however, let me look at the egg. Ah! yes, I am sure that is a turkey's egg. I should let it alone, and teach the others to swim."

"Oh! I will continue to sit on it for a while longer, as I have sat so long that I may just as well stay here till the harvest time."

"Well, it's your own business," said the old duck, and she waddled away.

But the great egg cracked at last, and the duckling said, "Cheep! cheep!" as it tumbled out, and it was so large and ugly! The duck looked at it, and looked again. "What a great, strong chick this is, none of the others are like that, can it be a young turkey-cock? I shall soon see, for go into the water it shall even if I have to push it in."

The weather was delightful next day and the sun was shining on the green leaves when the mother duck and her family went to the water. ... Splash! In she went calling "Quack! quack!" and one after another, all the little ducks went in too; the water came over their heads, but they rose up again, and swam together happily, their little legs moving easily, even the big ugly one.

"No," said the mother duck, "It is surely not a turkey, for it moves its legs gracefully, and holds its head upright, it is my own child and it is quite pretty in the water, "Quack! quack! now, come with me and we will go into the world, into the poultry-yard. Keep near to me or somebody may tread on you, and look out for the cat!"

So they went forth into the poultry-yard. There a fearful commotion was going on, for two of the families were disputing about some remnants of eel, which meanwhile were secured by the cat. "Now, children, that is

the way of things," said mother duck whetting her beak, for she, too, liked eels.

"Now move your legs," she said, "and keep together. You must bow to that old duck over there. She is the most noble of all the fowls here and is of Spanish blood, which accounts for her dignified looks and manners. She has a red rag on her legs, that is thought to be exceedingly handsome and is considered of the greatest distinction. Don't turn your feet in, a well-bred duckling must keep his feet well apart like his father and mother, thus: do you see? Now bend your necks and say, 'Quack!'"

All the little ducklings did as they had been told. But the other ducks in the same yard, said aloud as they looked at them, "Just look! now we are going to have another lot, surely there are quite enough of us already, and is not that one ugly, we will not bear it." And then one of the ducks flew at him biting him on the neck.

"Let him alone," said the mother duck, "he has done no harm to anyone."

"Yes, but he is so big and strange looking and we shall tease him."

"These are fine children that you have," said the old duck with the red rag on her leg. "They are all pretty but that one, which does not seem to have turned out well. Pity it could not be hatched out over again."

"That's impossible, Your Highness," said the mother duck. "He is not handsome, but he certainly is a good child and swims quite as well as the others. I think he will grow all right in good time and look rather smaller. It seems to me that the cause of the difference is that he stayed so long in the shell." As she spoke she stroked the duckling's neck and preened his feathers. "I think he will be strong," she said, "and he is a drake, so it does not matter so much, as he will fight his own way up."

"Well! the other ducks are really pretty, so make yourselves quite at home, and if you find an eel's head you can give it to me," said the old duck.

So they settled themselves comfortably. All but the poor ugly little duckling, who had been the last out of his shell, and was bitten, pecked and teased by both the ducks and the chickens.

"It is so clumsy," said everyone. Now the turkey,

who had been born into the world with spurs on his feet, and fancied himself an Emperor, puffed himself out like a ship with full sails and marched up to the duckling, crimson with passion.

The poor little duckling was quite distressed and did not know what to do, after which he was the butt and jest of the whole poultry-yard because of his ugliness.

After the first day had passed, matters grew worse and worse, and thereafter the poor duckling was mocked by everyone.

Even his brothers and sisters behaved very badly to him and constantly said, " May the cat take thee, ugly creature," while his mother would say. " Oh ! if thou wert only miles away from us."

The ducks snapped at him and the hens pecked him ; even the girl whose duty it was to feed the poultry kicked at him. He got over the fence, and the little birds in the bushes were frightened.

" That is because I am so ugly," said the duckling, but shutting his eyes he kept running on.

After running a long time he came to a great moor, where some wild ducks dwelt, and he slept there the whole night, uncomfortable and tired out. Next morning the wild ducks flew up and saw their companion.

" And who are you ? " said the wild ducks, and the little duck turned himself in all directions and greeted them politely.

" You are really very, very ugly," said the wild ducks, " but it will not matter to us if you do not marry into our families."

The poor little thing had never even thought of marrying, he only begged to be allowed to remain amongst the reeds and drink the water in the moorland pool. So he stayed there for two days, and on the third there came two young wild geese, or rather ganders not long out of their shells which accounted for their impudence.

" Listen ! " they said, " you are so ugly that we shall like you very well, will you come by away with us and become a bird of passage ? There are some sweet, young wild geese on another moor not far from here, they are as graceful creatures as ever hissed. Ugly as you are, you may win quite a good fortune."

Bang! went a gun suddenly and the two wild ganders fell dead amongst the reeds and stained the water red with their blood. Bang! again went the gun; flocks of geese flew upward from the reeds and another report followed.

This was caused by a grand hunting party; and the hunters were ambushed all round; there were even some in the trees whose great branches spread over the moors. A blue haze rose like a mist through the trees, vanishing as it floated over the water. The hounds were splashing about in the mud, bending the reeds and rushes in all directions and frightening the poor little duckling. He turned his head trying to hide it under his wing, when a most fierce-looking dog came quite close to him with its tongue lolling out of its mouth and eyes glaring fearfully. As he opened his jaws at the sight of the duckling, he showed his strong white teeth, but "splash! splash!" he was gone, and had not hurt him.

"Well, I must be thankful," said the duckling, "I must be very ugly indeed for even the dog would not eat me."

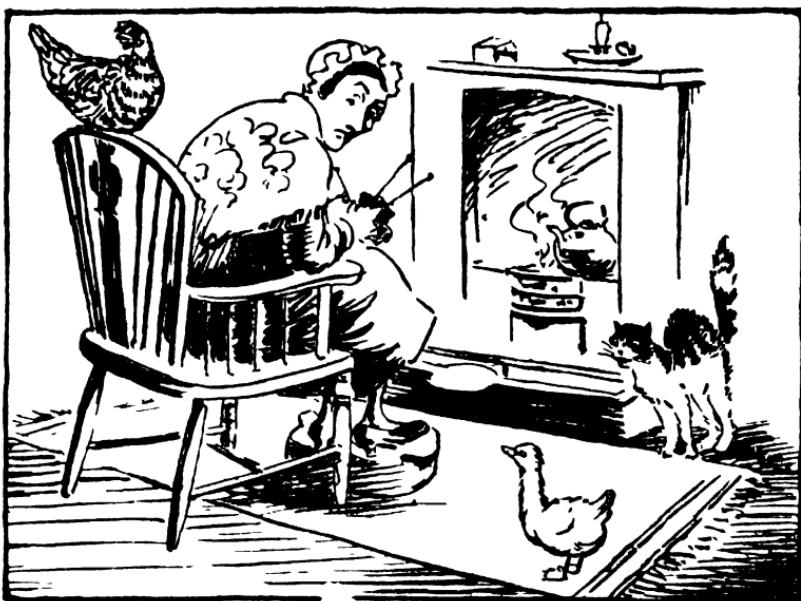
So he lay very still, while the shooting still went on in the reeds, shot after shot. The noise kept on until late that day, but even then the poor little duckling was afraid to move and he waited many hours before he dared to look around him. Then he ran away from the moor as quickly as he could.

Over fields and meadows he ran with the wind so strong that he could scarcely get along. About evening time he came to a little hut which looked as if it did not know which way to fall and so kept standing. The wind was blowing violently and the poor little duckling had to balance himself with his tail to stand against it, and the violence of the wind became worse and worse. He noticed that the door had lost one of its hinges and was hanging awry, so that he could manage to creep through the opening into the room.

Now an old woman lived in this room with her tom-cat and a hen. The cat, which she called her little boy, could arch his back and purr, and he could also give out sparks if he were stroked the wrong way. The hen was called "Cuckoo Shortlegs", because she had such very short legs, but she laid very fine eggs, and the old woman was as fond of her as if she were her own child. Next

morning the new visitor was seen, and the cat began to mew and the hen to cackle.

"Why, whatever is the matter?" said the old woman, looking around, but her sight not being good she thought our young duckling was a fat duck which had lost its way. "This is a capital catch," she said, "I shall now have duck's eggs unless it is a drake, we must find out." So the



"Why, whatever is the matter?" said the old woman.

duckling was tried for three weeks but no eggs were produced.

Now the cat considered himself master of the house and the hen thought she was mistress and they used to say, "We and the World", imagining themselves to be not only half of the world, but the better half of it. The duckling considered it was possible to think otherwise, but to this the hen would not agree.

"Can you lay eggs?" asked the hen.

"No."

"Very well then, hold your tongue."

The cat now asked, "Can you arch your back and purr?"

"No."

"Then you shouldn't give any opinion when important people are talking."

So the duckling had to sit alone, and was feeling ill-humoured, until thinking of the bright sunshine and fresh air outside gave him a strong desire to swim again, and he said so to the hen.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" asked the hen, "you have not enough to do, or you would not brood over such fancies; learn to lay eggs or purr, and you will soon forget them."

"But it is so delightful to swim," said the duckling, "especially when the waters close over your head and down you go to the bottom."

"Well! that is a queer idea of pleasure," said the hen, "you must be mad. Not to mention myself, ask the cat, for he is quite the wisest person I know, ask him if he would like to swim or plunge underneath the water. Ask our mistress; there is no-one more sensible than she is; do you think she would like to swim and have the waters close over her head?"

"You cannot understand me," the duckling said.

"What! we cannot understand you? So you think you know more than the cat, the mistress and myself? Leave off your fancies, child, and be thankful for the kindness you have received; you have been living in a nice warm room, and have had the company of those from whom you can learn, but you are so stupid that it is tiresome to have anything to do with you. I wish you well, and if I say things which may be unpleasant hearing, it is only to show real friendship. Now give yourself the trouble of learning to purr or lay eggs."

"Well, I think I had better go out into the world again," said the duckling.

"Very well, go," said the hen.

And the duckling departed. He swam on the waters, and plunged beneath, but the other creatures passed him by on account of his ugliness.

When the autumn came leaves turned red and gold, and the wild wind caught them up, and blew them about; the

air became quite cold, and heavy clouds bearing hail and snow darkened the sky, while the raven perched on the hedge and croaked. The poor duckling was now very miserable.

One evening when the sun was setting, amidst brilliant colours, a flock of handsome birds came flying out of the thicket. The duckling had never seen anything so lovely before ; their feathers were dazzling in their whiteness, and they had long supple necks. They were swans, and uttered weird cries, spreading their strong white wings, as they flew from cold countries to warmer climates across the sea. They flew so high, so very far above him, that the duckling's feelings became quite strange.

He twirled himself round and round like a water-wheel, then he stretched his neck to gaze after the swans, and uttered such a loud and curious cry that he was quite afraid of himself. But he could never forget them ! The splendid birds ! When he could no longer see them, he dived beneath the water, and when he came to the top again he felt quite beside himself with a strange excitement. The duckling could not tell what the birds were called, nor did he know where they were going, but he loved them more than he had ever loved anything before. It was not envy that he felt, for it never occurred to him to desire such beauty for himself ; he would have been content if only the fowls in the poultry yard would have allowed him to live with them in peace—the poor ugly creature.

And now the winter had become very cold, bitterly cold ! The duckling had to swim round and round in the water to prevent it from freezing, but despite his efforts the little space in which he swam grew less and less, the thin ice cracked and the duckling was compelled to keep his legs moving in order to prevent the water from freezing altogether. At last, tired out, he lay still and cold in the ice. Next morning a peasant passed by, who broke the ice with his wooden shoe and took the duckling home to his wife.

The bird soon recovered, and the children would have liked to play with him, but the poor duckling thought they meant to tease him, and in his fright fell into the milk-pail, and the milk was spilled over the room. The good wife screamed at him, clapping her hands, whereupon he flew

into the pan where the butter was kept, then out of that into the meal-barrel and back again. How curious he looked now!

The woman screamed again and aimed a blow at him with the tongs, the children raced each other trying to catch him, and laughed and screamed also. It was a good thing that the door stood open ; he flew out into the bushes where the snow had newly fallen and lay there almost fainting.

It would be too sad to relate all the misery and discomfort which he had to endure through the long cold winter, but, one day, as he was lying on a moor amongst the reeds, the sun commenced to shine down warmly once again, and the larks sang for joy that spring had come once more.

He spread his wings ; they were much stronger than before and bore him onwards so quickly that before he was aware of it he had arrived in a large garden where there were apple trees in full blossom, and the syringas were sending forth their perfume, and hanging their long green boughs into the water of the canal. Everything was fresh and full of the beauty of spring.

Out from the rushes nearby, there came three beautiful swans, preening their white feathers as they floated, proud and stately. The duckling knew the splendid creatures and felt strangely sad.

"I will fly to them, the noble birds," he said, "They may kill me because I, who am so ugly, have dared to approach them, but better be killed by them than to be bitten by ducks, pecked by hens and hunched by the girl who feeds the poultry, and to endure so much through the winter."

He flew into the water and swam towards the beautiful creatures, who, seeing him, came forward to meet him.

"Now kill me," cried the unhappy duckling, and he bowed his head to meet his death ; but, what did he see in the water ? Beneath him he beheld his own reflection, but no longer that of a clumsy ugly grey bird—he was a swan himself !

It does not matter if you are hatched in a duckyard when you have been laid in a swan's egg. The good bird felt himself uplifted by the troubles he had endured ; he could now appreciate his present happiness as the great swans

swam up to him and stroked him with their beaks. Some of the little children who were playing about in the garden saw him, and the youngest cried, "Oh! here is a new one," and the others said, "Yes, a new swan has come," and they clapped their hands and danced about. Then they ran to their mother and father and brought back bread and cake to throw upon the water, and everybody said, "See how beautiful the new swan is," and the old swans bent their heads to him. The young swan felt quite embarrassed and hid his head beneath his wings, too happy to know what to do, but yet not feeling proud, for a pure heart is never proud. He had not forgotten how he had been despised and teased by everyone, and now he could hear them all saying that he was the most beautiful of these splendid birds.

The syringas bowed down their branches before him low into the water, and the sun shone now so warm and bright. He shook out his feathers and lifted his slender neck in the joy of his heart thinking, "How little did I imagine such great happiness when I was the miserable ugly duckling."

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

A LONG, long time ago, there lived an emperor who was so exceedingly fond of new clothes that all his money went in dress.

He did not trouble at all about his army, nor did he care for the theatre or hunting, unless it gave him another occasion to show off his new clothes. He possessed a fresh suit for every hour of the day and instead of being able to say of him as they did of other Kings or Emperors that "he was sitting in council", one could only remark about the Emperor, that "he was sitting in his wardrobe."

Time always passed pleasantly enough in the great city which was his Capital and strangers came to the court each day. One day, however, there came to the city two rogues who called themselves weavers. They claimed that they

knew how to make stuffs of the most exquisite colours and wonderful designs and that the clothes made from them would have the wonderful property of being invisible to such persons as were unfit to hold their positions or who were extremely foolish in mind.

"Now these," said the Emperor, "must be wonderful new clothes, and if I had a suit like that I could discover how many of the people in my kingdom are unfit to hold their positions and also I should know how to distinguish between the wise and the foolish. I will have this stuff woven for me at once."

So he sent large sums of money to the weavers in order that they should begin their work at once.

Now the two supposed weavers set up their looms and affected to work at them very industriously although actually they were doing nothing at all. They demanded the most expensive silk and thread made from the purest gold, which they packed into their knapsacks but went on pretending to work at the empty looms until late every night.

"Now I wonder how those weavers are getting on with my stuff," thought the Emperor after some time had passed; but he was rather embarrassed about this, for he recollects that a foolish man or one unfit to hold his position would not be able to perceive the woven cloth.

"To be sure," he said to himself, "he had nothing to risk personally, but still, he would rather send someone else to let him know everything about the weavers and the result of their labour before he went himself into the matter! Everybody all over the city had been informed of the wonderful power which the material would have and all were naturally desirous to discover the wisdom or the ignorance of their neighbours.

"I think I'll send my honest old Counsellor to the weavers," said the Emperor after some hard thinking about it. "He will be a splendid judge of how the cloth looks, for he really is a man of sound intelligence, and no one could be better fitted than he to hold his present position."

So he sent the old Counsellor into the great room where the two rogues were weaving away busily at their empty frames. The old man, opening his eyes in surprise, thought

to himself, "Now whatever does this mean? They have not got any thread on the looms at all!" But he was wise enough not to say what he thought.

The two rogues, very politely, asked him to be kind enough to approach the looms. The poor old Councillor stared and stared but could not see any cloth on the frames at all, because, naturally, there was none. "What!" thought the Councillor, "Can I be an idiot? I never looked upon myself as one and I must not let anyone else suspect it if it is so. Surely I am capable enough for my position! People must not suggest that I am not, so I must not own that I cannot see any cloth at all."

"Well, Lord Councillor," said one of the rogues, still feigning work, "you do not say whether you like the cloth."

"Oh, it is quite wonderful," said the Minister, "both the colours and the designs, and I will at once inform the Emperor of its beauty."

"We shall be most indebted to you," said the two rogues, and then they told him the names by which the colours and designs of the imaginary material were known. The aged Councillor listened well to their descriptions of the stuff so that he could tell the Emperor about it in detail and the rogues requested him to let them have more silk and gold which they said they required to finish the work already started. But all they received went direct into their sacks and they took up their work at the empty frames with as much energy as they had shown before the Minister's visit.

The Emperor then commissioned another of his courtiers to inspect what the weavers had done and find out when the stuff would be finished. The same happened with this officer as with the old Councillor. He looked all round the looms from every angle but could not see anything whatever on them.

"Do you not admire the cloth, its design and colour as much as did the Minister?" asked the rogues of this second royal messenger, and they acted as they had done to the Councillor and talked to him of patterns and colours which did not exist.

"I am sure I am not a fool," thought the courtier to himself. "I suppose it must be that I am not quite suitable

for my splendid, well-paid position. It is very curious ! However, I will not let anyone find out."

So he praised the invisible material and announced that he was filled with admiration for its superb colours and designs.

" If your Majesty pleases," he said to the Emperor when he was back at the palace, " I consider that the cloths your weavers are making are wonderfully fine."

The whole city was talking about the marvellous material which was being made for the Emperor at his own cost.

But now the Emperor himself desired to inspect the expensive cloth while it was still being woven, so with a chosen number of officials among whom were the two trustworthy men who had already given their good opinion of the stuff, he went to the wily rogues who worked the loom with an even greater show of labour when they realised that the Emperor was coming, although there was not one thread passed over the machine.

" Are they not obtaining wonderful results ? " said the two court gentlemen we have already met. " Deign to inspect the cloth, your Majesty, and see what marvellous patterns and beautiful colours ! " and at the same time they called his attention to the threadless looms, for they thought that every other person would see the cloth as a perfect creation.

" Now whatever is this ? " said the Emperor to himself. " I can't see anything. This is frightful ! Am I an idiot ? Am I unworthy to be Emperor ? Surely nothing could be more terrible than that !—Oh yes, the cloth is really exquisite and quite meets with my approval," he said aloud. And he gave a very gracious smile and looked intently at the empty frames, for never would he own that that which his two officials praised so highly was invisible to him.

The whole of his courtly following gazed terribly hard in the hope of finding something on the frames but they could not see anything more than the others, yet they all cried, " Oh, how magnificent ! " and urged the Emperor to have this wonderful stuff made into some new clothes for the coming procession. " Charming ! Perfect ! Splendid ! " one heard all around and not a soul but was joyous and light-hearted. The emperor was equally pleased and

decorated the rogues with a badge of knighthood which each was to wear in his button-hole while they were to be called "Gentlemen Weavers".

The rascals were up all night, the day previous to the procession, keeping sixteen lights burning all the time so that the whole world should see how desirous they were of finishing the Emperor's new clothes. They made pretence of taking stuff from the looms, cutting the air with their shears and sewing with un-threaded needles.

At last they said, "Look! the Emperor's suit is now finished."

Then the Emperor, with all his highest nobles, came to the weavers, and the rascals feigned to be lifting something up and said, "Here are your Majesty's trousers, this is the scarf and there is the robe. The complete outfit weighs no more than a feather and when wearing it it would be easy to think that one had no clothes at all, but that, of course, is the marvellous property of our exquisite material."

"But yes!" said the gentlemen, in spite of the fact that none of them could see a sign of the beautiful material at all.

"Will your Majesty deign to disrobe, and then we will try on your new suit before the mirror?"

So the Emperor permitted them to take off his garments. While the rascals made pretence of dressing him in these wonderful new clothes, the Emperor inspected himself in the glass from all angles.

"His Majesty does look fine in his new suit! And does it not fit perfectly!" they exclaimed. "What beautiful colours and patterns! These garments are truly fit for a King!"

"The canopy under which your Majesty will walk is now waiting," said the courtier who was to arrange the proceedings.

"I am ready," said the Emperor. "Do my clothes fit well?" again surveying himself in the mirror so that it might seem that he was inspecting the wonderful clothes.

The gentlemen of the Bed-Chamber, who usually support his Majesty's train, felt over the ground as they would have done if they had been raising the hems of the robe, and feigned to be bearing his train, for they naturally

did not want to appear simpletons or to be considered unworthy of their office.

The Emperor walked through the streets of his great city in the centre of the procession beneath his superb canopy, and everyone standing around and people at the windows of the houses called out, "How wonderful our Emperor's new clothes are! What a beautiful train the robe has! With what grace the scarf falls!" for of course nobody wanted to admit that he could not see such admirable clothes, since, if he had done so, he would have shown himself to be either a fool or one who was unworthy of his post.

Without doubt, no former apparel of the Emperor's had created such an effect as these clothes that no-one could see.

"But the Emperor isn't wearing *any* clothes!" said a young child.

"Hear what Innocence says!" exclaimed its father, and whispers went round among the people repeating the child's words.

"But he isn't wearing *any* clothes!" they all cried out at last.

The Emperor was annoyed, for he knew that their words were perfectly true, but he knew too that the procession had to continue and the Gentlemen of the Bed-Chamber tried harder still to pretend that they were bearing the train although they had no train to bear.

THE ROSE ELF

ONCE upon a time a rose tree full of beautiful roses bloomed in the middle of a spacious garden; and in the most beautiful rose of all there lived a tiny elf. He was so small, so very tiny indeed, that he could not be seen by human eyes. Beneath every rose petal he had an arbour and he was as fair and graceful as a child could be, with wings that hung from his shoulders right down to his little feet. His bowers were so perfumed and their walls so



Sittin' close together, wishing that they would never need to part again.

light and bright, for they were formed by dainty pale-hued rose-leaves.

He passed his whole day basking in the warm sunlight and flitting from blossom to blossom, riding upon butterflies' wings and counting how many steps he had to take to run over the paths and highways of a single linden-leaf. For what we term the veins of the leaf were like paths and highways to him and to travel over them seemed quite a long journey. The sun had set before he finished his travels, because he had begun late.

Now it grew quite cold, the dew was falling fast and a chill wind was blowing, so the best thing to do was to return home quickly, but although he made all possible haste, he found all the roses had already closed, not a single rose was open for him to get in. Now the poor elf was indeed frightened, for he had never remained out in the cold night air; ever before he had slept so warmly and sweetly between the rose-leaves. It would surely be the death of him.

At length he remembered that, at the very end of the garden, there was a bower of honeysuckles with blooms like large coloured horns, and he thought he might be able to climb into one and sleep there until morning, and therefore away he flew to this place. But in the bower there were two people, a handsome youth and a beautiful girl, who were sitting close together, wishing that they would never need to part again. They loved each other so dearly, more even than the best child ever born could love his father and mother.

"But we must part," said the young man, "for thy brother does not care about our happiness, and he is sending me far away across the mountains over the wide ocean. Farewell! my sweet bride, for surely thou art my bride."

So they embraced each other, while the young girl wept and gave him a rose, but before she gave it to him she impressed on the flower a kiss so warm that it caused the flower to open, and then the little elf flew in and leant his head against the wondrous fragrant walls. He could hear the words "farewell! farewell!" so distinctly, that he knew the rose had been placed in the young man's bosom.

The young man's heart throbbed so violently that the little elf could not sleep at all. The rose was not allowed to remain for long in its warm place, for the young man

soon took it out, and whilst walking in the dark wood, kissed it so often and so vehemently that the poor little elf was nearly squeezed to death. He could feel the man's lips burning even through the rose-leaves, and the rose itself began to open more and more as if the warm mid-day sun were shining on it.

But another man came through the wood, who looked gloomy and wrathful. It was the lovely young girl's wicked brother, and while the young man was kissing the rose, he stabbed him to death, and cutting off his head, buried both head and body in some wet earth under a lime tree.

"Now he is dead and we shall be rid of him," said the wicked brother, "and he will never come back again. He was to have gone a long journey over mountains and the sea. Well, men often lose their lives in travelling like that. He will not come back and my sister will never dare to question me about him." So with his foot he scattered some withered leaves over where the earth had been upturned and walked home in the darkness of the night.

But he did not go alone as he imagined ; the little elf went along with him, sitting tightly rolled in a withered lime leaf that had fallen on the wicked man's hair when he was digging the lover's grave. But when the man put on his hat it was very dark for the little elf beneath, who was trembling with horror and indignation at the shameful deed he had seen.

In the morning the wicked man reached his home, and having taken off his hat, went into his sister's sleeping room. The lovely girl was dreaming of him she loved so well and who was now, she imagined, travelling far away over forest and mountain. Her wicked brother bent over her with a devilish smile and the withered leaf fell from his hair onto the coverlet without his noticing it, and then he went away to sleep himself.

The elf now came out of the withered leaf and sliding into the ear of the sleeping girl told her, as if it were a dream, of the terrible murder of her lover ; he showed her the place where her brother had buried the body, near the lime tree, and said, "In token that what I have told you, is not a dream, when you awake you will find a withered leaf on your bed."

When she awoke and found the withered leaf on her,

she shed bitter tears, but she was afraid to tell anyone about her great sorrow.

The window was kept open the whole day and the elf could have readily flown back to the roses and the beautiful flowers in the garden but he could not find it in his heart to leave one who was so wretched.

There was a monthly rose standing near the window and he got into one of these, and sat there looking at the heartbroken girl. Her brother frequently came into her room, looking quite merry, but she was afraid to speak to him of her heart's sorrow.

When night-time came, she slipped quietly out of the house and went into the wood to where the lime tree grew and swept away the dry leaves and dug up the wet earth until she found the dead body of her poor murdered lover. She wept over it and prayed that the good Lord would let her die too!

She would gladly have taken the body back home with her but this she dare not do, so she lifted the head, and while kissing the pale, cold lips, shook out the earth that was clinging to the hair. "This I will keep," she said, and she cut off one of the rich dark tresses. Then, covering up her lover again with the earth and withered leaves, she went back home, taking with her the lock of hair and a little bough of a jasmine bush that was blossoming near the grave.

When she was home, she took the largest pot she could find, put the lock of hair at the bottom and filling the pot with garden mould planted the bough of jasmine above it.

"Farewell! Farewell!" said the little elf. He had not the heart to see such misery and he flew back to his own rose. But when he found it, it had faded with only a few pale leaves clinging to its stalk. "Alas! everything that is good and beautiful so quickly passes away," said the elf sadly.

Having at last found another rose that would suit him for a home he lay down in the perfumed petals. But henceforth, every morning he flew to the window of the poor sorrowing girl, and he always found her weeping over the flower pot. Her tears fell on the plant, and while she grew paler and paler the jasmine daily grew fresher and more green, little shoots continually pushing forth from it, and

the beautiful white buds opening into flowers. When she kissed the flowers her wicked brother mocked her, asking her if she had lost her wits. He could not understand why she was ever crying over the jasmine.

One day, when she was leaning her head against the flower-pot, she fell asleep and while she was sleeping the little Rose-elf flew into the room. He crept into her ear and again related what he had heard in the arbour on that sad evening, and told her of the beauty of the sweet smelling roses and of the love that the flower spirits bore to her.

Her dreams were sweet and beautiful and her life gently departed even while she was dreaming in peace and quietude. So she came to rest with him she loved so dearly.

The blossoms of the jasmine opened their lovely white bells, sending forth a delicious perfume, this being their only way of bewailing the dead.

The wicked brother noticed the beautiful little tree, now in full and fragrant bloom, and considered it now his property. He took it into his sleeping room placing it near his bed. The little rose-elf followed it, flying from flower to flower, for in each flowerlet there was a little spirit and he told them all about the murdered young man whose beautiful hair was at the bottom of the mould in which they had their roots, and of the wicked brother and heart-broken sister.

"We knew it," said the spirits of the flowers. "We knew it! for we have sprung forth from the dark tresses of the dead. We knew it," and they nodded their little heads in a strange manner.

The rose-elf could not understand why they took it so quietly, so he flew away to the bees gathering honey in the garden, and he told the whole story to them. The bees told it to their Queen and she gave them orders to go next morning and kill the murderer.

But that very night—and while the wicked brother was asleep in his bed, near which he had placed the jasmine tree—every little flowerlet opened and out flew a flower spirit from each with a poisoned arrow. First they crept into his ears, making him dream of his horrible deed, and then flew through his lips and stabbed him in the tongue with their poisoned shafts.

"Now we have avenged the dead lovers," they said, and went back to the white jasmine flowerlets.

In the morning when the bedroom window was open, the rose-elf flew in with the Queen bee and her swarm following; they had come to sting the murderer to death. But he was already dead; persons round the bed declaring that the powerful scent of the jasmine tree had killed him.

The rose-elf understood, and he explained to the Queen bee how the flower spirits had taken their vengeance on the murderer, and the Queen bee with her whole swarm went buzzing round the pot to show their approval. The people could not drive them off, but when a man took up the pot intending to carry it away, one of the bees stung his hand, causing him to drop the pot on the ground and break it to pieces.

Then the people present beheld the beautiful hair of the murdered lover and guessed that the man on the bed was the murderer.

The Queen bee flew humming around the garden, telling of the flowers' revenge, and of the rose-elf, and how, beneath even the tiniest leaf, there dwelt a spirit who knew if a crime were done, and could punish the criminal.

THE LAST DREAM OF THE OLD OAK

Not far from the sea-shore and high up in the forest there flourished a fine old oak-tree. It was exactly three hundred and sixty-five years old, but to the tree that was only as long as the same number of days would be to us. We are awake by day and asleep at night and it is then that we dream. But this is not so with trees; they remain awake through three quarters of the year and do not get any sleep at all until the winter comes. Winter is their time of rest, it is their night time after the long days of spring, summer and autumn. Through the warm summer, the Ephemera, those little flies which only live for a single day,

had hovered about the old oak enjoying their brief lives very happily, and when any of the little creatures alighted on one of his big green leaves, the tree would say, "Poor little creature! Your entire life lasts only one day. It is so short; it seems very sad."

"Sad! What do you mean?" the little creature would answer. "Everything around us is so beautifully bright and warm and wonderful that I am always joyful."

"But it is only for a day and then it is all over."

"Over," said the fly, "what do you mean by over? Are you over also?"

"No! I shall live on for thousands of your days and my day is a whole season; it is so long that you could never even reckon it."

"Then I don't understand. For if you have thousands of my days, I have thousands of moments in which to be happy and joyful. Does the beauty of the world end when you die?"

"No, it will certainly last much longer, longer than even I can think of."

"Then we both have the same time to live," answered the tiny fly, "but we reckon differently." So the little creature hovered and danced merrily in the air, thankful for her pretty wings of velvety gauze, enjoying the gentle breezes laden with the fragrance of the wild rose and sweet clover, of elder blossom and honeysuckle from the garden, with wild thyme, rosemary and mint, and the perfume from all these was so strong that the little fly was almost intoxicated. The beautiful long day had been so full of joy and happiness that when the sun set at last it was tired of gaiety and sweet delights. Its wings could no longer carry it; and slowly and gently it floated down on the soft green blades of grass, and nodding its little head as well as it could, sank sweetly and peacefully to sleep. The tiny creature was dead.

"Poor little fly! What a dreadfully short life," said the oak.

So every fine summer day the flies danced. The same questions were asked and the same replies were given, and this was continued by many generations of Ephemera, who were all just as joyous and glad.

The oak was awake through the morning of spring,

the mid-day of summer, and the twilight of autumn, but its time of rest was approaching ; for now winter drew near ; the storms were already calling, "Good night ! Good night ! " ; then a leaf fell here and there. "We will lull you to sleep. We will rock you to sleep, we will shake you and sing you to sleep. It will do your branches good : they will crackle with joy : sleep well, sleep soundly ; it is your three hundred and sixty-fifth sleep. In truth you are but a youngster as yet, so sleep deeply. The skies will drop snow upon you for a warm coverlet to shelter your feet. Sound sleep and sweet dreams to you."

There stood the oak tree bereft of its leaves, left to slumber through the length of the winter and to dream of many things that had happened in its life, just as it is in the dreams of man. The huge tree had at one time been very small. Its cradle had been an acorn and in human reckoning it was now in its fourth century of life. It was the greatest and best tree in the wood. Its topmost branches towered over the other trees and it was even a landmark for mariners as it could be seen far off at sea, but it did not know how many eyes looked out for it. In its summit the wood pigeon had her nest and the cuckoo called out its well known notes among its branches. In autumn when the leaves were like beaten copper, migrating birds would perch on its branches before they flew across the sea. But now that the winter had come, the tree stood stripped of its leaves and all could see how old and crooked were the branches that grew from its trunk. Rooks and crows came in turn to perch upon them, talking of the hard times which had begun and the difficulty of getting their food in winter.

It was very near to Christmas time when the oak tree dreamt a dream. The tree had no doubt a sort of feeling that the festival time had nearly come, and in its dream thought it heard all the bells ringing from the churches around, though it seemed to be a warm summer's day, bright and fair. Its topmost branches were crowned with fresh growth, and new green leaves, while the sunshine flickered amongst its branches and the herbs and blossoms filled the air with their perfume ; gay butterflies were chasing each other, while the summer flies fluttered around him just as if the whole world had been created solely for

them to dance and rejoice in. Everything that had happened to the tree all the years of its life seemed to pass in front of it like a procession at festival time. Knights of olden time and noble ladies rode through the wood mounted on their gallant steeds with waving plumes upon their hats and falcons at their wrists. The dogs barked and the hunters' horns sounded. It saw fighting warriors in bright armour, in cloaks of many colours, carrying swords and spears, pitching their tents and afterwards removing them. The watch-fires flared and armed men moved and slept beneath the friendly shelter of the old tree.

It saw young lovers meeting in the moonlight in all their loving joy and cut the letters of their names on the grey-green bark of its trunk. Long years ago merry travellers had hung guitars and *Æolian* harps upon its branches, and now it fancied that they hung there once more and it could hear their wonderful music.

The wood pigeons cooed as though to express the feelings of the tree and the cuckoo cried out to tell it how many summer days it had still to live. New life seemed to be rising up to its highest boughs and rushing through every fibre of root and branch and leaf. The oak tree felt itself spreading and reaching out while the full strength of life ran through its roots under the earth.

The tree dreamt it grew higher and higher still and its topmost summit became 'hicker and heavier and as it grew so its rejoicing increased and there arose a happy desire to grow still higher to reach up to the great bright sun itself.

Already its topmost boughs had penetrated the clouds which floated under them like flocks of migrating birds or great white swans ; and its very leaves seemed given eyes with which to see. The stars seemed visible in broad daylight, big and sparkling like clear and beautiful eyes. Memory recalled a well known look in the face of a child or in the eyes of lovers who met long ago under the branches of the old tree. These had been 'beautiful moments for the old oak, full of joy and peace but still, despite all this gladness, the tree felt a yearning desire that all the other trees, bushes, plants and flowers below him should also be able to rise as high as itself, and see all the splendour and beauty which it had enjoyed. The great majestic oak tree

would not be quite content in the midst of all its happiness unless the others, both great and small, were able to share it.

This feeling of yearning surged through each branch and each leaf just as intensely as if they had been the sinews of a human heart. The top of the tree waved gently bending downwards as if in its silent longing it was seeking for something. Then came to it the perfume of thyme and the stronger fragrance of honeysuckle and violets and it even thought it could hear the note of the cuckoo. At last this desire was satisfied, for up through the clouds came the green tops of the forest trees and below it saw them mounting higher and higher. Bush and plant also rose upward even tearing themselves up by the roots to rise more speedily. The birch tree was quicker than any for its slender stem soared up in a zig-zag line like a flash of lightning, its branches floating around it like green lace and gay pennons. All the natives of the forest, even the feathery brown rushes, rose up with the others, and birds soared upwards with the music of their songs. A grasshopper sat cleaning his wings with his legs upon a blade of grass which waved in the breeze like a long green ribbon. The bees droned, May-beetles hummed and birds caroled each after his own fashion so that the air was filled with joyful sounds.

"Where is the small blue flower that grows at the water side?" asked the oak tree, "and the daisy and the purple bell flower?" for the oak wanted them all to be there with it.

"We are here, we are here," sang their voices. "But the fragrant thyme of last summer and the lily-of-the-valley which perfumed the earth last year and the wild cherry tree with its lovely flowers and all the beauty of the forest which has bloomed year after year even the new growth which had just budded might be with us here."

"Here we are, here we are!" caroled the voices, high above as if they had already been there.

"Why, this is wonderful indeed," cried the oak tree joyfully. "They are all here, big and small, not one has been overlooked." Can such happiness be imagined? It seemed too good to be possible. "In heaven with the eternal God all things are possible," rang the answer from above.

Then the old oak tree, while it still stretched upwards and outwards could feel its roots were becoming loosened away from the soil.

"It is better so. It is right," said the oak. "Now no fetters can bind me. I shall be able to fly to the heights of love and glory with all I love around me. All are here with me."

This was the vision of the old tree and while he was dreaming a great storm arose over land and ocean at the blessed Christmas time. The ocean rushed in mighty waves towards the shore. There was a crackling and creaking all over the tree and the roots were torn from the soil even while the tree was dreaming that it was being loosened from the ground. The tree fell—its three hundred and sixty-five years had passed away even as the single day of the Ephemera.

At Christmas morn the storm had ceased by sunrise. All the churches were ringing the Christmas bells and from every hearth, even the smallest cottage, smoke was rising into the blue sky like the smoke from the offerings upon ancient Druids' altars. The sea had become calm again and on board a great ship that had withstood the storm all through the night, the flags were unfurled, waving as a token of joy and thanksgiving.

"The tree has fallen! The old oak which was our landmark on this coast," said the sailors. "It must have been struck down in the gale last night. Alas! no one can replace it." So they made a small but well meant funeral oration over the old oak.

There on the snow covered shore lay the old tree; above it sounded from the ships the notes of a carol of Christmas gladness and redemption of the soul of man to eternal life, while all on board the ship felt his thoughts uplifted through human prayer just as the old tree had felt itself uplifted in its last and most beautiful dream in the blessed Christmas dawn.

THE GOBLIN AND THE HUCKSTER*

ONCE upon a time there was a thorough student ; he lived in an attic, and had no belongings at all ; and at the same time, there was a thorough huckster, who lived upon the ground floor, for the whole house belonged to him ; and the goblin lived with him, because there was ever a plate of plum porridge, with a big pat of butter melting on top of it, at the huckster's table at Christmas time. The huckster was able to afford that, and therefore the goblin remained at the huckster's shop, and that tells one a great deal indeed.

One evening, the student passed through the back entrance to purchase some cheese and candles for himself, for he had no one to send. He obtained what he required and paid for it, and the huckster and his wife both said "Good evening" to him, although the wife was a woman who could say a good deal more than that, for she possessed a great gift of speech. The student nodded to her, and then halted suddenly to read the piece of paper in which the huckster had wrapped his cheese. It was a page which had been torn from an old book, a volume full of poetry, and one that really should not have been torn up.

"There is more there of the same kind," said the huckster, "I gave a poor woman some coffee for the books. Pay me two groschen and you can take the rest of them."

"Very well," replied the student, "I will take the book in place of the cheese ; my bread and butter can be eaten without the cheese. It would be a shame to destroy such a book entirely. You are a good man and a business man, but you do not understand poetry any more than that barrel over there."

It was really an insulting speech, particularly towards the barrel ; however, the huckster only laughed and the student laughed too, for it had been only said as a jest. But the goblin was enraged that anyone dare speak in such a manner to a huckster, who owned the house he lived in and sold the finest butter.

*A huckster is one who keeps a small general store.

At nightfall, when the shop was shut, and everyone had gone to bed, the goblin crept out, and going into the bedroom, took away the good-wife's tongue, as she did not require it while she slept. Now when he put this tongue on anything in the room, it immediately acquired the gift of speech and could give expression to its thoughts and feelings quite as well as the lady herself could have done, although only one thing at a time could use it, which was, of course, fortunate, as otherwise they would have always been interrupting one another.

The goblin placed the tongue on the barre which had a number of newspapers on the top.

"Now," said the goblin, "Is it true that you don't understand poetry?"

"Of course I do," said the cask, "Poetry always comes at the end of a column in the newspapers, and is sometimes cut out; I vow that I have more of it in me than the student has, though I am only a poor barrel."

Then the goblin placed the tongue on the coffee-mill, and Heavens! how it went! He put it on the butter barrel and the cash till, but they were all of the same opinion as the newspaper barrel, and you must respect the opinion of the majority.

"Well, now I will tell this to the student."

Whereupon, the goblin stole quietly up the back stairway to where the student lived in the attic. The student still had his candle alight, and the goblin looked through the keyhole and perceived that the student was engaged in reading the torn book which he had purchased in the shop below; and how bright it seemed in the attic! Up from the book, there shone a bright ray of light, growing into a broad beam, and then into a great tree with spreading branches that reached upward far above the student. All the leaves were green, and each flower was a beautiful maiden's head, some with bright dark eyes, while others were of a deep blue; each fruit was a glittering star and the student's room was filled with the sound ofondrous singing.

The little goblin had never imagined anything so wonderful, much less heard or seen the like. Standing quietly on tiptoe, he watched, until at last the light went out. Possibly the student had blown out the candle before going to bed, but the goblin continued standing outside

the door, for the wondrous music still rose and fell, a beautiful lullaby for the student who had gone to rest.

"This is a marvellous place," thought the goblin. "I never imagined a place like this. I would like to live here with the student."

But the little man considered the matter, for he was quite a sensible little man, and then, with a sigh, he said,

"But the student has no plum-porridge." So he crept down again to the huckster's shop, and it really was fortunate that he had got down there again at last, for the good-wife's tongue had been nearly worn out by the barrel. It had expressed all that was contained in it on one side, and was fast turning over to express all that was in the other side, when the goblin came in to give back the tongue to its rightful owner.

But afterwards, the entire shop drew its opinions from the barrel, treating him with the greatest deference, even the cash-till and the firewood, and indeed, they thought so highly of him, that when the huckster was reading out from the newspaper the articles upon theatrical and artistic matters, they imagined that the information was supplied by the barrel itself.

But the goblin was no longer satisfied to listen to such wisdom as could be obtained in the shop below. As soon as the candle gleamed in the student's attic at nightfall, he felt as though there were strong chains which drew him up there again, to watch through the keyhole. Up there, a feeling of power seemed to flow around him, such as we feel at the side of the mighty ocean, when the tempest rages upon it; and the goblin wept. What a wonderful thing it would be, if he could sit with the student beneath that splendid tree. But that could not be. He had to satisfy himself with looking through the keyhole, and be content with that.

So he stood on the cold stair-landing, with the chill wind blowing upon him from the loft above, and it was very, very cold, but the little man scarcely noticed that until the light was put out, and the sweet sounds in the tree had ceased. Then he shivered, and went quickly back to his warm corner downstairs where there was homeliness and comfort.

At length Christmas came, bringing also the large plate

of porridge with the big piece of butter on top, and then it seemed to the goblin that the huckster was a better man than the student. But at midnight, there came a fearful uproar and knocking on the windows, which awakened the goblin.

People rapped loudly outside the shop, and the watchman blew his horn, for a big fire had started and all the street was filled with flames and smoke. Where could it be ? Was it this house or one of the neighbour's ? Everyone was seized with fright, and the huckster's wife was so confused, that she pulled the golden ear-rings from her ears and placed them in her pocket so that at least she could be sure of saving something. The huckster ran upstairs for his bond papers, and the sewing maid for her new silk mantilla, for somehow, she had contrived to buy one.

Each wished to save the thing they considered the most valuable, and the goblin desired to do the same, so in a few bounds he was at the top of the stairs and inside the attic, where the student was standing quietly looking out of the window at the blazing fire that raged in the neighbour's house across the street. The goblin took hold of the marvellous book which was lying on the table, and, popping it into his red cap, held it tightly in both hands.

He had saved the greatest treasure in the house, and up and away he ran, to the roof tops, and sat upon the chimney. There he stayed, lit up by the flare of the blazing house across the way, with his hands tightly clasped over the cap which held his greatest treasure ; for now he understood his real feelings, and knew where they belonged.

But after the fire had been put out, and the goblin could consider things calmly once more, " Very well," quoth he, " I must divide my time between the two, for I cannot leave the huckster altogether, on account of the porridge."

Now the goblin had spoken quite like a human being ; all of us have to stay with the huckster sometimes, on account of the porridge.

THE NIGHTINGALE

ONCE upon a time, there was an Emperor of China, and of course he was a Chinese and all his people around him were Chinese too. Well, the story I am going to tell you happened a long time ago, but if only for that reason you really ought to hear it now, lest it should be forgotten.

This Emperor's palace was quite the most wonderful palace in the world ; it was built entirely of fine porcelain which was very costly ; but it was so brittle that it was quite dangerous even to touch it. The garden was always full of the choicest flowers and to the best of these they fastened little silver bells so that they could tinkle when people passed by and they were sure of being noticed.

Yes ! indeed in the Emperor's garden everything was well arranged and it was so large that even the gardeners did not know the end of it. But if anyone walked beyond it, they would come to a beautiful wood with very tall trees, and after that to the sea. The wood reached down quite close to the sea, which was bright blue and deep, and great ships could sail close beneath the branches. Now amongst these branches lived a nightingale who sang so sweetly that even the poor fisherman who had so many things to do, would stop and listen to her.

" That is pretty," he would say, but then he was compelled to go on with his work and forget about the bird ; still on the following night, when the nightingale was again singing, the fisherman would come out and again say : " That is indeed pretty."

Travellers from all parts of the world came to the Emperor's capital. They all admired greatly the city, the palace and the garden, but when they heard the nightingale, they all said, " This is the best of all."

When they went home they talked about her and praised her above all they had seen or heard ; poets wrote beautiful verses about the nightingale that lived in the wood by the sea. Their books went all over the world, and one of them at last came to the notice of the Emperor. Sitting in the garden in his golden chair he read and read, nodding his head every now and then, for he was greatly pleased at

these wonderful descriptions of the city, his palace and the garden. "But the nightingale was the best of all," so it was written in the book.

"What is this?" cried the Emperor, "the nightingale! I know nothing about it. Is there such a bird in my kingdom? in my very garden, without my having heard about it. Truly much may be learnt from books."

So he called for his chief Courtier. This was a really great person so great in rank, that nobody below it dare speak to him, and if any did venture to do so he only answered "Pish!" which after all does not mean much.

"There is supposed to be a most remarkable bird here, which they call the nightingale," said the Emperor, "and her singing is said to be worth more than anything else in my kingdom. Why is it that no one has ever mentioned her to me?"

"You see, my lord, I have never heard about her," said the chief Courtier, "possibly because she has never been presented at Court."

"Let her then appear this evening and sing before me. The world seems to know possessions of mine which I know nothing about," exclaimed the Emperor.

"Well," said the Courtier, "no one has ever said anything about her to me, but I will search until I find her."

But how and where could he find her? The Courtier ran up and down the palace, through the halls and passages, but none of those he met had heard of the nightingale, and so the Courtier went back to the Emperor saying, "It can only have been imagined by the man who wrote the book. Your Imperial Majesty, we must not always believe a thing because it is written in a book, many of the things related are purely imaginary, and besides there is what is known as Black Magic."

"But this book in which I read about the nightingale," said the Emperor, "was sent to me by the great and mighty Emperor of Japan, and cannot be false. I much desire to hear this nightingale and she must come this evening. If she is not here after supper, I will have the whole of the Court flogged."

"Tsing-pe," said the Courtier. Then again he climbed up the stairs and ran down again, through the corridors and through the rooms, and quite half of the Court were

running about with him, for none of them cared to be flogged. There were many questions asked about this wonderful nightingale, about which the whole world was talking, and of which the Court knew nothing. At length they came across a poor little girl who worked in the kitchen and she said, "Oh, yes! the nightingale! I know her very, very well, and how sweetly she can sing. Every evening I am allowed to carry some pieces left from the tables home to my poor sick mother—she lives close to the sea shore—and when I am walking back I stay and rest a little in the wood, then I hear the nightingale singing, and it makes tears come into my eyes as if my mother was kissing me."

"Little kitchen-maid," said the Courtier, "I will obtain for you a sure place in the Palace kitchen and special permission to see his Majesty dine, if you will take us to the nightingale, for she has to be in Court this evening."

They then went together to the wood in which the nightingale was heard and half the court went with them, but while they were going on their way a cow began lowing.

"Oh!" cried the little court pages, "Now we hear her; it is indeed a big voice for so small a creature. We think we have heard it before."

"No," said the kitchen-maid, "That is only a cow lowing, we are still very far from the place."

The frogs now croaked in their pond.

"That is wonderful," said the chief court-priest, "I can hear her; it sounds just like church bells."

"No," said the kitchen-maid, "those are only frogs croaking, but we shall soon hear the nightingale."

And then the nightingale commenced her song!

"Now she is singing! Listen! She is sitting up there," and she pointed towards a small grey bird upon one of the branches.

"I should not have thought it possible, she looks so simple, she must have changed colour at the sight of so many persons of rank."

"Little Nightingale," said the kitchen-maid, "our Gracious Emperor desires you to sing something for him."

"With great pleasure," said the nightingale, and her singing was a delight to hear.

It sounds like the musical glasses," said the Courtier, "and see how her little throat moves. It is strange that we should never before have heard of her. She will be quite a success at the Court."

"Shall I sing once more for the Emperor?" asked the nightingale, for she supposed that the Emperor was with them.

"Most charming Nightingale," said the Courtier, "I have the honour to invite you to the Court festivity this evening and his Imperial Majesty will be delighted to hear your wonderful singing."

"My song sounds best amongst the green trees," said the nightingale, but she willingly accompanied them when they told her that the Emperor desired it.

There was much cleaning and decorating at the palace; the walls and the floors, which were entirely of porcelain, shone with the lights from a thousand lamps; numbers of golden bells tinkled and the most lovely flowers filled the passages, everyone was running to and fro in the passages, making the bells ring so loudly that you could scarcely hear your own voice.

In the centre of the great hall in which the Emperor sat, a golden stand was built up, on which the nightingale could perch. The whole court was there, and the little kitchen-maid was given permission to stand behind the door, for she had obtained the rank of "Maid of the Kitchen." The whole court were dressed in their finest clothes and they fixed their gaze on the little grey bird to whom the Emperor was now nodding as a signal for her to commence. So the nightingale sang so wonderfully that tears welled up in the Emperor's eyes, and trickled down his cheeks, and then the nightingale sang still more sweetly and melted the hearts of all those who heard her, and the Emperor was so happy that he said the nightingale should have his golden slippers and wear them about her neck. But the nightingale thanked him and said she was sufficiently repaid.

"I have seen tears in his Majesty's eyes and that is the finest reward I could receive. The tears of an Emperor have a remarkable value. Heaven knows that I am amply rewarded," and she commenced to sing again with her sweet, lovely voice.

"It is the most charming kind of coquetry we have ever witnessed," said some of the ladies and they poured water into their mouths and tried to move their throats in the same way as she did, hoping to become nightingales too. The footmen and maids declared that they were quite contented, a most wonderful thing for them to say, for they are most difficult people to please.

Truly the nightingale's success was great indeed. She was now to live at court and to have her own cage, with permission to fly out twice in the daytime and once during the night. Twelve servants were to attend her, who had to hold a silken cord fastened about her foot, and they kept firm hold. But there was no joy in excursions made in such a way.

The whole city was now talking about the wonderful bird and when two people met, one would only need to say "night" and the other to answer "gale" and they would understand each other perfectly. Eleven children of the inhabitants were named, "Nightingale," though none of them had her beautiful voice in their throats. But one day there came a large parcel for the Emperor marked "Nightingale."

"Here," said the Emperor, "is another new book about our celebrated bird." But it was not a book, it was a small piece of mechanism lying in a box; an artificial nightingale which was cleverly made to appear like the living one, but was encrusted all over with diamonds, pearls and sapphires. When the mechanical bird was wound up, it could sing one of the melodies which the real nightingale sang, and its gold and silver tail would go up and down all the time it was singing. There was a little band round its neck on which was inscribed, "The Nightingale of the Emperor of China is very dull when compared with the Nightingale of the Emperor of Japan."

"That is splendid," said everybody, and he who brought the parcel was given the title, "Chief Imperial Nightingale Bringer."

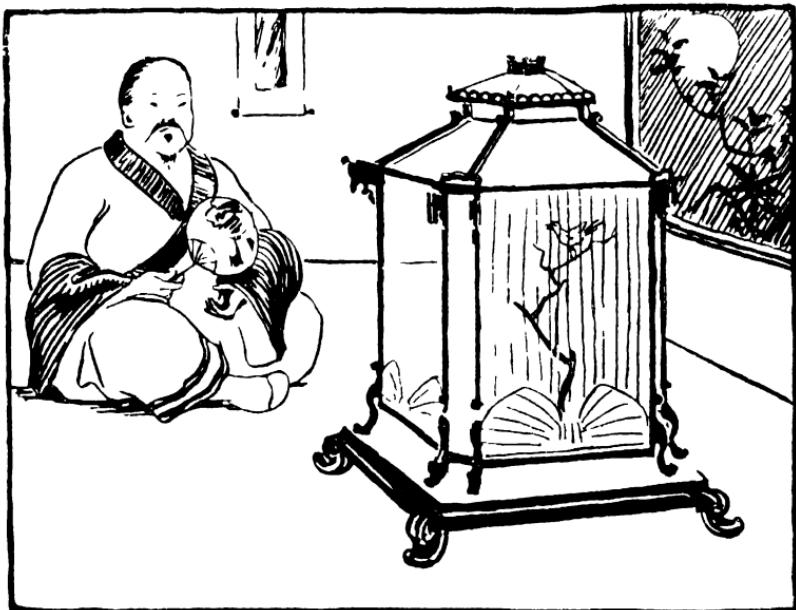
"Now," said they, "they shall sing together. But this was not a success for the real nightingale sang in her own way and the mechanical one produced his notes by wheels.

"It is not the bird's fault," said the artist, "he keeps

correct time and sings quite in accord with the rules."

So the mechanical bird had to sing alone, but he was quite as successful as the natural nightingale, and then he was so much more beautiful to look at, and his feathers sparkled with flashing gems.

Three and thirty times he sang over the same tune, and yet he was not tired, and everyone would have liked to hear him yet again ; and then the Emperor wanted to hear the real nightingale sing, but where had she gone ?



Three and thirty times he sang over the same tune.

No one had noticed that she had flown through the open window, up and away to her own green trees again.

"What is the meaning of this," said the Emperor, and all the courtiers abused the nightingale and called her a most ungrateful bird. "But we have the best nightingale," they said, and they heard for the thirty-fourth time the same song, and still they did not know it, for it was extremely difficult. The artist, of course, praised the bird up to the skies, and declared that it was vastly superior to the natural nightingale, not only because it sparkled

with jewels on the outside, but also in the quality of its singing.

"For you can see, my noble lords, and you, Your Majesty, could never quite count on what was coming next, but with this artificial bird everything is certain; he will always sing this way and no other. This, of course, can be proved, and also he can be taken apart and all the works displayed; where the wheels are, and how they work, and how one thing follows from another."

"Now that is exactly what I think," said everyone, and the artist had permission to display the bird to the people on the following Sunday. "They ought also to hear him sing," said the Emperor.

So the people listened to him and were just as happy as if they had been drinking tea, for the Chinese make themselves merry with tea, and they all said, "Ah!" and raised their fingers, nodding their heads. But the old fisherman, who had listened to the real nightingale said, "It is quite pretty, almost like the natural bird, but there is a something, I feel, that is lacking, although I cannot say what it is."

But now the real nightingale was banished from the kingdom. The artificial bird was given the place of honour on a silken cushion near the Emperor's bed. All the gifts, the gold and precious stones (which had been presented to him) lay around him, and the rank and title of "High Imperial Court Singer" was given him, and consequently his place was Number One on the left side. They thought that the place of honour would be on the side where the heart was situated, and his heart, although he was an Emperor, was situated on his left side just the same as that of other people.

The artist wrote twenty-five books about the mechanical bird, which contained the longest and most difficult words in the Chinese language. Of course, everybody said they had read and understood them, or they would have been considered stupid or even flogged.

So it continued for a whole year. The Emperor, the Court, and the whole of the Chinese people had learnt by heart every note of the mechanical bird's song, but that was a good reason why they liked it so much, for they now sang with him. Even the little boys in the street

sang, "Ziz! cluck, cluck, cluck," and the Emperor himself also sang, and that indeed was really delightful.

One evening, while the artificial bird was singing and the Emperor lay in bed listening, there was a loud noise and something went "Bang!" inside the bird, then it went "Burr-r" and its wheels ran all ways at once and the music ceased.

The Emperor got out of bed quickly and called his chief physician, but he was of no use. Then a clockmaker was brought and, after a long consultation, the bird was put into somewhat better order, but the clockmaker said he ought not to do much singing for the pegs were nearly worn out, and they could not be renewed in such a way that the music would be correct.

There were great lamentations, for now the mechanical bird was only to be allowed to sing once a year, and with difficulty then. The artist made a speech full of long words, which said that the bird was as good as ever, and of course it must be so.

Five years had passed by when there befell a great calamity upon the empire, for, in their hearts the people loved and revered their Emperor, and now he was lying very ill, and it was said that he must die. A new Emperor had been elected, and people stood in the street, anxiously asking the Chief Courtier how the Emperor fared. "Pish," said the Courtier, and shook his head.

The Emperor lay cold and pale in his magnificent bed; all the court believed 't he was already dead, and everybody had gone to bow before the new Emperor. Men were gossiping on the subject, and the maids were enjoying a tea-party amongst themselves.

The floors of the whole Palace had been covered with felt so that not a footstep could be heard, and everywhere it was silent and still; so very still! However the Emperor was not dead although he lay pale and stiff in the Imperial bed, with its long velvet curtains and great golden tassels. The window was open, and the moon was shining down upon the Emperor and the mechanical bird.

The poor Emperor could now hardly breathe; he felt as though something were pressing heavily upon his chest, and, opening his eyes, beheld Death himself, who, having put on the Emperor's crown, was holding the golden

scimitar in one hand and the grand Imperial banner in the other ; while from between the thick velvet curtains, weird-looking faces looked forth, some with horrible expressions and others with a sweet and gentle aspect. They were the good and evil deeds of the Emperor, which were now standing before him, whilst Death pressed upon his heart.

"Dost thou remember this ? Dost thou recollect that ?" they began whispering and reproaching him until beads of perspiration broke out upon his brow.

"I have never before felt anything like this !" said the Emperor, "Bring me music ! Bring the great Chinese drum, that I may not hear what they are saying." But no one came to obey him and the voices still continued, while Death in true Chinese fashion nodded at every word.

"Music ! Music !" said the Emperor, "thou sweet-voiced bird, sing ! Oh ! sing to me ! I have given thee gold and many jewels, and even hung my slipper about thy neck, sing, dear bird sing !" But the bird was silent, for no one was there to wind up his mechanism, and he could not sing unless this were done. Death continued gazing at the Emperor from his large hollow eyes, and was silent, so dreadfully silent. But suddenly the loveliest song was heard from the window ; it was the real nightingale who sat upon a bough outside, she had heard about the Emperor's illness, and had come to sing to him of hope and recovery. Even as she sang, those deathly shapes grew paler and paler, and the blood flowed more warmly through the Emperor's weak limbs, while Death himself listened and said, "Go on ! sweet nightingale, go on !"

"Wilt thou then give me the Emperor's scimitar," asked the nightingale, "his silken banner and his golden crown ?"

So Death gave her even these things for a song, and the nightingale sang again, telling of the stillness in the churchyard where the white roses bloom, and the lilac gives forth its perfume, and the grass is ever freshly bedewed with the tears of those who mourn for the departed, until Death felt a great longing for his own garden, and like a cold grey shadow flew away through the window.

"I thank thee," cried the Emperor, "I know thee well,

my little heavenly-voiced bird. I banished thee from my kingdom, but thou hast returned to sing away from my bed those spectral faces, and charm Death himself from my heart ; how can I ever repay thee ? ”

“ Thou hast already repaid me,” answered the nightingale, “ I have seen the tears in thine eyes again, just as when I sang to thee for the first time. I shall never forget them ; no jewels can be so dear to the minstrel’s heart as the memory of thy tears, but now, sleep, and waken refreshed and well again. I will sing thee to sleep once more.”

And while she sang, the Emperor sank into a deep sleep. Oh ! how sweet and healing was that sleep.

The sun was shining through the window when he awoke, strong and well. None of his attendants had returned, for they all believed him dead, but the nightingale was still singing.

“ Thou shalt always live with me,” said the Emperor, “ thou shalt sing only when it pleases thee, and I will break the mechanical bird into a hundred pieces.”

“ Do not do that,” said the nightingale, “ for he has done all that he could ; take every care of him. I cannot live in the Palace, but let me come when I please ; I will sit on the boughs close to thy window at eventide, and sing to thee of the joys and the sorrows around thee. The little singer can fly far away to the fisherman’s hovel, and the peasant’s cottage, and to places a long way from thy court. I love thee for thy heart more than for thy crown, although a crown has something holy about it. I will come and sing often, if thou wilt promise me but one thing.”

“ Anything,” said the Emperor, and now he stood up in his Imperial grandeur, which he had donned himself, and held his golden scimitar to his heart. “ The one thing I request of thee,” said the nightingale, “ is this : Let nobody know that thou knowest a little bird who tells thee all these things, and all will be well.”

Then the nightingale flew away, but when the attendants came to look upon their dead Emperor, Behold ! they stood amazed, for the Emperor said “ Good morning.”

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS

"All my flowers have faded," said little Ida. "Yesterday evening they were so very pretty and now they are quite drooping. What is the reason of it?" she asked the student, who was a great favourite with her because he used to tell her little stories, and would cut out such pretty things for her in paper such as hearts with a little lady dancing on them or flowers or large castles with open gates, etc. "Why do these flowers fade so soon?" she said showing him a bunch of faded flowers.

"Don't you know?" said the student. "Why your flowers went to a ball last night and now they are tired and that is the reason that they are hanging their heads!"

"But flowers cannot dance," said little Ida.

"Why, of course they can dance. When it is dark night and we are all in bed, they jump about as merrily as possible. Almost every night they have a ball."

"Can children go to the ball?" asked Ida.

"Yes," said the student, "as well as the daisies and lilies-of-the-valley."

"Where do the prettiest flowers dance?"

"Have you ever been in that beautiful garden which is laid out in front of the King's palace and which is so full of lovely flowers? You remember the swans with their beautiful graceful white necks, which swam up to you when you were throwing them crumbs of bread? Well, it is there that they have their splendid balls."

"I was there with Mother yesterday," said Ida, "but there were few leaves on the trees and not a single flower. What has become of them. There were so many of them last summer."

"They are all at the palace now," replied the student. "When the King leaves his summer palace and returns with his court to town the flowers also hasten out of the garden into the palace where they thoroughly enjoy themselves; if you could only see them! The two loveliest roses act as King and Queen and sit on their thrones. The red cockscombs range themselves in rows and bow very low, for they are the gentlemen of the bed-chamber.

And now the prettiest among the flowers arrive and open the ball. The violets represent midshipmen in blue and dance with the hyacinths and crocuses, who act the part of the young ladies. The tulips and the orange lilies are the dowagers who have to see that all things go on with perfect propriety."

"But," said little Ida, "are the flowers allowed to give their ball in the King's palace?"

"Nobody knows anything about it," said the student. "Once during the night time the old chamberlain perhaps comes in with his keys in his hand to make sure that all is right; but the moment the flowers hear the clank of the keys, they become quite still and hide beneath the long silk curtains. 'I can smell flowers,' says the chamberlain, but he is unable to find them."

"That is funny," said Ida, clapping her hands, "but can I not see the flowers?"

"Certainly you may see them," answered the student, "if you peep in at the window when you next go to the palace. I looked in to-day and there was a long yellow lily lying on the sofa. Now she was a court lady."

"May the flowers in the Botanical Gardens also go there? Could they go so far?"

"Oh, yes, for they can fly if they wish to. The lovely red and yellow butterflies that look like flowers are really nothing else. They jump off their stalks and, moving their petals as wings, fly away; now if they behave themselves well, they are allowed to flutter here, there and everywhere all day until wings really grow out of their petals, and you have often seen this for yourself. Now it may be that the flowers in the Botanical Gardens have not yet heard about the merry-making that goes on nightly at the palace. But you can be sure, when next time you are in the gardens, if you whisper to any of the flowers that there is a ball to be given that night at Freidrichsburg your news will go from flower to flower and they will be sure to fly there. Now if the Professor should happen to come into the gardens he will wonder what has become of them."

"Indeed," said Ida, "but how can flowers tell each other what I say to them? They cannot speak."

"No, you are quite right; they cannot speak," said

the student, "but they can make each other understand by pantomime. Have you not seen them waving to and fro at the least puff of wind? They understand each other by this means, just as we do by talking."

"Does the Professor understand their movements?" asked Ida.

"Surely! One morning he came into the garden and saw that a tall nettle was speaking to a pretty red carnation. 'I love thee so much because thou art so beautiful,' said the nettle. But the Professor could not allow this so he rapped on the nettle's leaves—which are its fingers—but in doing so the leaves stung him and the Professor has never dared to touch a nettle since."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Ida. "Now that was foolish"

At this moment the grave counsellor, who had come there on a visit, interrupted.

"What do you mean by this? Putting such ideas into little children's heads" He disliked the student, and always used to scold when he saw him cutting out little figures, as, for instance, on old witch riding a broomstick and carrying her husband on the tip of her nose. He always used to say, just as he said now, "What do you mean by putting such things into children's heads, it is all fantastic nonsense"

But little Ida considered that what the student had told her about the flowers was very curious and she kept thinking about it. She now felt sure that when the flowers were hanging down their heads they did so because they had danced so much the previous night. So she took them to the little room where she had arranged all her playthings. Her doll was sleeping in the toy cradle, but Ida said to her: "Sophy dear, you must now get up and sleep to-night in the table drawer, because the poor flowers are all tired and must sleep in your bed, but they may be well again to-morrow." She took the doll out of her bed, but the little lady looked annoyed at having to give up her cradle for the flowers.

Ida laid the poor faded flowers in the bed, drawing the coverlet over them, and telling them to be quite still while she made some tea to drink, which would make them well next day, and in order that the sun might not shine in their eyes she pulled the curtains around them.

That evening she thought only of the student's words and before she went to bed ran to the window where her mother's tulips and hyacinths were, behind the blinds, and whispered to them, "I know that you are all going to the ball to-night." But the flowers did not seem to hear her for they did not move a petal.

When she was in bed it seemed to her that it must be very delightful to see the flowers dance at the ball and she said to herself, "I wonder if my flowers went there?" But before she could settle the point she fell asleep.

She awoke during the night; she had been dreaming about the flowers and the student and the Counsellor who told her that he had been deceiving her. Everything was quite quiet in the room, the night-light was burning on the table and her father and mother were asleep.

"I would like to know," she said, "if my flowers are still lying in Sophy's bed!" So she raised herself a little and looked towards the door which was half open and saw that the flowers and playthings were as she had left them. She listened as she thought she heard somebody playing on the piano, but the music was more delicate and sweet than any sound she had ever heard.

"My flowers must surely be dancing," she said, "I should dearly like to see them." But she dared not get up lest she should wake her father and mother. "If they could come in here," she thought. But the flowers did not come although the music continued so sweetly. At last she could no longer refrain from trying to see the dancing, and quietly slipping out of her bed she tip-toed towards the door of the room, and then what wonderful things she saw!

The night-light was not burning now, but it was quite bright in the room, for the moon was shining through the windows on to the floor. The hyacinths and tulips were standing there in rows while their empty pots could still be seen in the windows. They performed dancing figures and held each other by their leaves. A large yellow lily was seated at the piano and Id thought she had seen her before for she remembered the student saying how this flower resembled Miss Laura, and at that everyone had laughed. She herself thought that the lily did indeed look like this lady for she played in a similar manner,

bending her long yellow head now to this side and now to that, and nodding as if to mark the time. A tall purple crocus now stepped forward and leapt upon the table, which held Ida's playthings, walked up to the bed and pulled back the curtains. The sick flowers lay there, but they rose at once, greeting all the other flowers, who asked them to dance. The sick flowers stood up looking quite well again and danced quite as well as the others.

All at once a thud as of something heavy falling off the table was heard, and Ida glancing that way, saw that it was the rod which she had found on her bed on Shrove Tuesday morning and which was now anxious to rank itself amongst the flowers.

Certainly it was a very pretty rod, for a wax doll was fastened at the top, who wore a hat as wide-brimmed as the Counsellor's, with a red and blue ribbon tied about it. She jumped round on her three red feet in the centre of the flowers, stamping on the floor with her stilts. She was dancing the Mazurka, a clumsy measure which the flowers, who are very light-footed, could not dance.

All at once the doll upon the rod grew and grew until it became a giant, tall and broad, who said in a loud voice, "What do you mean by putting such ideas into a child's head? It is all fantastic rubbish." Now the doll looked as much like the Counsellor in his wide-brimmed hat, as one raindrop is like another. Her face looked as sallow and peevish as his, so the paper flowers which were fastened to the rod, pinched her thin legs, and then she shrank back again to her original size.

Little Ida thought this scene so amusing that she could not restrain her laughter, but the company at the dance did not observe this, for the rod continued to jump about until the doll Counsellor was forced to dance also, against her will, making herself look first thin and then thick, one moment tall, the next short, until the flowers pleaded for her to be left in peace.

Suddenly there was a loud knocking from the drawer in which Ida's doll was lying. It was Sophy, who was making the noise. She popped her head out of the drawer and asked, "Is there a dance here? Why was I not told of it?"

"Will you dance with me?" cried the nutcrackers.

"Indeed! you are not a fit person for me to dance with!" and Sophy turned her back on him. She then seated herself on the table, thinking that one of the flowers would ask her to dance, but no one came. So she coughed "Ahem," but still no flower came forward. Meanwhile the nutcrackers danced by himself, and his step was not at all bad. Since no flowers came to ask her to dance Sophy let herself drop down on to the floor, which caused a general confusion, and the flowers ran to ask her if she were hurt.

But she was quite unharmed; the flowers, nevertheless were all most polite, especially Ida's flowers, who thanked her for the comfortable bed in which they had slept so soundly, and took her hands to dance with her while the other flowers stood in a circle about them.

Now Sophy was very pleased and asked Ida's flowers to use her bed again when the ball was over, for she would not mind sleeping for one night more in the drawer.

However, the flowers only said, "Many thanks indeed for your kindness, but we shall not live long enough to require it, for to-morrow we shall be dead, but ask Ida to bury us in her garden close to her canary bird and we shall grow again next season and be even lovelier than we were this summer."

"No!" said Sophy. "You must not die," and she kissed the flowers.

At this moment the door was opened and in trooped a number of dancing 'we's. Ida could only think that these flowers had come from the King's garden. First there entered two lovely roses, each wearing a golden crown, then followed stocks and pinks bowing to all sides. There was also a band of music; big red poppies and peonies who blew upon pea-shells until they were quite red in the face, and blue and white campanulas ringing their peal of bells. These were followed by a large number of various flowers all dancing; vio'ets, daisies, lilies-of-the-valley, daffodils and many others, swaying so gracefully that it was a delight to behold them.

At length these joyous flower said "Good night" to each other; then little Ida went back into her bed, dreaming of all the wonderful ball she had seen.

Next morning after she had got up and dressed, she

went to her table to see if the flowers were there. She pulled back the curtains : there were the flowers, certainly, but they were still more faded than they had been yesterday. Sophy still lay in the drawer, but she seemed exceedingly sleepy.

"Don't you know what you were told to say to me ?" said Ida, but Sophy only looked stupid and said nothing.

"You are very forgetful," said Ida. "After the flowers let you dance with them, too." She chose a little cardboard box from amongst her toys ; it had birds painted on it, and in this she put the dead flowers. "This shall be your coffin," she said, "and when my cousins come from Norway to visit me, they shall help me to bury you in my garden, then next summer you will bloom once more and be lovelier than ever."

The two cousins, of whom she had spoken, were two merry boys named Esben and Jonas. Their father had bought for them two new crossbows, which they showed to Ida, who then told them of the dead flowers which she was going to bury in the garden. The two boys marched in front with their bows across their shoulders, and little Ida followed them, bearing the dead flowers in their painted box, and dug a grave for them in her own little garden.

She kissed the flowers again, and put the box into the hollow, filled it with earth again, and Esben and Jonas shot their arrows over the grave, in place of firing guns or cannon.

THE SILVER SHILLING

ONCE upon a time there was a Shilling. He came forth from the Mint where all the good shillings are made, bright and shining, and he cried, "Hurray ! Now I am going to see the wide world." And soon into the world he went.

He had many adventures ; a child held him in small soft hands, hardly knowing his value ; a miser snatched at him eagerly and held him tightly in his greedy palm ; an old man turned him over in his hand several times

before parting with him, afraid that he might never see his like again ; a youth, careless of the future, tossed him away on a trifle. The Silver Shilling had now been a whole year in his native country, but now he was about to see the world in real earnest.

—A traveller, about to go abroad, found him—the last English coin in his purse.

“ Why, here’s a Shilling ! ” he cried. “ I must have forgotten to change it, so I will take it with me for luck.”

The Shilling danced for joy when he found himself thrust back into the purse, and lay amongst many strange companions. These came and went very quickly, but the Shilling stayed in the purse, which made him feel very proud.

Some weeks had passed, and the Shilling had travelled many miles though never knowing exactly where he was. From the other coins he gathered that they were Italian, or French, and though they often said that they were in this town or that, the Shilling could never prove it for himself. He who has to hide his head in a sack, sees nothing of the world outside.

But, one day, he saw that the purse was open, so he rolled forward to the edge in order to see his surroundings. But he rolled too far and thus slipped out into the pocket, and when the purse was next used, the Shilling remained in the pocket and was taken out with the clothes by the servant. The Shilling fell on the floor unnoticed, and the gentleman having received back the clothes after they had been brushed, proceeded on his journey, leaving our friend the Shilling behind.

The coin was soon found, however, and was sent out with three others.

Our coin was not frightened. “ It is good to see the world for oneself,” he said. “ I shall meet strange folk and learn strange customs.”

“ Throw him away, the coin is a false one.” The words struck terror into the heart of the Shilling. He knew that he rang true when thrown on to a counter or table, and that he had been properly coined.

“ They must have made a mistake,” he said to himself. “ They could not mean me ! ”

But they did mean our Shilling. “ I must get rid of

it when it is dark," said the man to whom the coin had been given ; and so, given away at night, and abused by day when he was discovered, became the Shilling's daily treatment. "It is no good—get rid of it!" and the Shilling trembled every time a fresh palm took him.

How miserable he was. Of what use was his silver, his value in his own country, his famous coinage, if all these things were considered valueless ! The world puts its own value upon all things, and although the conscience of the Shilling was as bright as his metal, he felt how terrible it must be to be guilty of any wrong-doing. Each time he was shown, he shivered ; for he knew he would be thrown back again with the words, "No use, it is bad. Get rid of it."

One day he was paid to a poor old woman in her wage for a long and hard day's work, and although she tried very hard, she could not dispose of the Shilling ; no one would take the coin, and the loss weighed heavily on her. "I can't keep a false shilling," she said. "Perhaps the rich baker will take it ; the loss will not be so great to him." And although her conscience pricked her at even thinking of deceit, she went to the baker ; but he was not to be deceived, and he threw it back to her and refused to sell her any bread.

How miserable felt the Shilling ! for he hated to be the cause of the poor old woman's misery. But the old dame took him home again and looked at him with friendly gaze despite the loss.

"It is not your fault," she said. "I will not try to deceive anyone. I will pierce you with a hole, so that everyone will know at once you are useless, except perhaps as a lucky coin. Yes, I will hang you upon a cord, for my neighbour's little boy, as a lucky Shilling."

So she bored a hole through the Shilling and, though it hurt him, he felt glad that he was not going to be called an impostor or bad any longer. So he was turned into a kind of medal, and hung round the little child's neck, and he was caressed and loved, once more an honest, lucky Shilling.

But the next day, the child's mother took the coin in her hands and, after a minute or two, she fetched a pair of scissors and cut the cord.

"A lucky Shilling, well we shall soon see." She laid him in vinegar so that he turned quite green, then she filled up the hole and, when night-time came, she went to the lottery collector to buy a ticket.

Once more the Shilling trembled. He felt sure that he would be called a false coin and thrown back again, in front of all the other coins who lay so proudly on the counter. But the room was full of people all intent on buying lottery tickets, and the Collector was in a hurry, so our Shilling went spinning down into the box with the other coins.

In the morning, however, he was easily seen to be "bad," and once more was cast out, bandied from one hand to the other, each one only anxious to get rid of him. And so, for over a year, he went from house to house, from hand to hand, always unwanted, and called a cheat and an impostor.

At last, when he had despaired of ever being used again, a Traveller came, and it was given to him in his change. He prepared to give it away again, though he said, when it was pointed out that the coin was false, "Well, it was given to me as a good coin."

The traveller rubbed the Shilling between his fingers and, as the metal began to shine, he looked at it closely. Then he smiled; the first time anyone had smiled on our coin for a very long time.

"Why!" exclaimed the Traveller, "This is one of my own country's coins; a Shilling; a good, honest Shilling! Fancy boring a hole through him and calling him a bad coin! This is a curious coincidence! I will keep him and take him back with me."

The Shilling trembled again, but this time with happiness, and if he had not been made of hard metal, he would have shed tears of joy to think of his being called a good, honest Shilling, and to be taken back home where everyone would know he was a real coin of the country.

So he was wrapped up carefully in a piece of paper, and put carefully away lest he be spent or lost by mistake, and when the Traveller and some of his fellow countrymen met together, he would show them the Shilling and tell them how he had found him.

At last the Traveller came back and all the Shilling's

troubles were ended. Once more he was an honoured coin of the right stamp and value, and although he had had a hole bored through him, this did not show, nor did it take away from his value. He had seen the world, and learned how easy it is to be considered false, though "If only one waits long enough, everything will be righted," said the Shilling, and perhaps he was right.

THE DARNING NEEDLE

ONCE upon a time there was a Darning Needle who thought herself so fine that she imagined herself to be an embroidery needle.

"Mind you hold me tightly," she would say when the Fingers took her out of the needle-case. "Take care of me, for if I fall to the ground I shall certainly be lost, as I am so fine!"

"That's as it may be!" said the Fingers, and they held her round the body.

"Mind my train!" said the Darning Needle, drawing after her a long piece of thread; but there was no knot in the thread, so it passed right through her.

The Fingers pointed the Darning Needle to the cook's slipper in which the upper leather had broken away, and was now to be sewn together again.

"That is common work," said the Darning Needle. "I shall never get through such hard, vulgar material. I'm breaking! I'm breaking!" and break she did. "There! Did I not say I would break?" she cried. "I am too fine!"

"Now this needle is quite useless!" said the Fingers, but the cook dropped some sealing wax upon the needle and pinned her lace tie together with it.

"Now I am a breast-pin!" said the Darning Needle proudly. "I knew I should gain great honour in the world. When one is born something, one comes to something!" She laughed quietly to herself and sat as proud as if she was in a state-coach, looking all about her.

"May I ask if you are a golden pin?" she asked of a

pin, her neighbour. "You have a very fine appearance, even though your head is rather small. You must make haste and grow, for it is not everyone that has sealing wax decoration given to her." The Darning Needle drew herself up so proudly that she dropped right out of the cook's tie into the sink which was being rinsed out.

"Now we are going on a journey!" said the Darning Needle as the water carried her down into the drain. "If only I do not get lost!"

But lost she really was.

"I'm too fine for this world," she told herself as she lay in the gutter. But I know who I am, and that's something to be proud of, surely."

So she kept her pride, and did not lose her good humour while many objects swam over her—chips, straws, and bits of paper.

"See how they sail!" said the Darning Needle. "They don't know who is lying under them! I'm here, and I stick firmly here, too. See, there goes a chip of wood, thinking only of himself. There's a straw now, turning and twisting! If he doesn't think of something besides himself he will knock his empty head against a stone. There swims a bit of newspaper. Everyone has forgotten what was printed upon it, so it need not give itself such airs. But I sit here quietly and patiently. I know who I am and the duty I owe to my position."

One day an object that glittered brilliantly lay close beside her; the Darning Needle thought it was a diamond. It was, however, only a bit of Broken Bottle. The Darning Needle introduced herself as a breast-pin.

"You are a diamond, I suppose," she said admiringly.

"Yes, something like it," was the reply, and each believed the other to be an object of great value, and began giving their respective views about the world above them.

"I have always lived in a lady's work-box," said the Darning Needle. "She had five fingers on each hand, and you never saw anything so conceited; yet they were only there in order to lift me out of the box and put me back again."

"Were they of good birth?" asked the Bit of Bottle.

"No, indeed," replied the Darning Needle, "but very stuck-up. There were five brothers, all of the Finger

family. They kept themselves to themselves though they were of different lengths ; the outermost, Mr. Thumb, was short and fat ; he always walked out first, and had only one joint to his back. He could only make a single bow, but he said that if he were hacked off from a man, that man was never required for service in war.

“ The second, Mr. Dainty-Mouth, thrust himself into everything, sweet or sour ; pointed to all things, even the sun and moon, and pressed hardly when he and the others wrote together. Mr. Longman was the third, and he looked at all the others over his shoulder. Mr. Gold-border was the fourth and wore a golden belt round his waist, while little Mr. Playman just did nothing at all and seemed proud of it. They all did nothing but brag about what they could do, and that is why I went away.”

“ And now we sit here and glitter ! ” said the Bit of Bottle.

At that moment a sluice of water came into the gutter, and the Bit of Bottle was carried away.

“ So that is the end of him,” cried the Darning Needle, “ but I remain here. I am too fine. I know it is pride, but my pride is an honour ! ” Proudly she sat there and had many great thoughts.

“ I'm so fine I really believe I was born of a sunbeam,” she reflected. “ Indeed, it always seems as if the sunbeams are looking for me beneath the water. Perhaps one of them is my mother and she cannot find me. If I only had my old eye, which was broken off by that common Leather, I think I could cry : but I must not do that, for it is not ladylike to cry.”

One day, two street urchins were playing in the gutter, in which they sometimes found such treasures as old nails or even farthings. One of them, dabbling his hands in the dirty water, pierced one of his fingers with the Needle.

“ Oh ! ” he cried, “ What a nasty fellow you are ! ”

“ I'm not a fellow, I'm a lady,” cried the Darning Needle.

But no one listened to her. The red sealing wax had fallen off, and she had turned black.

“ But black makes one look slender,” she said to herself, and thought herself finer than ever.

“ Here comes an eggshell ! ” said one of the boys. “ Let's make a boat, and this can be the mast.”

So they stuck the Darning Needle fast in the eggshell, and sent it forth on its travels again.

"White walls and my slender black figure will make everyone wonder what I am doing!" said the Darning Needle. "But I only hope I shall not be seasick."

She was not seasick, but crack! went the eggshell, as a hand-barrow crashed over her, and away went the pieces and the Darning Needle down the drain to the sewers beneath, where perhaps she still sits, patient and proud of being fine.

THUMBELINA

ONCE upon a time there was a woman who prayed for a very little child, but as time passed and she did not get her wish, she went at last to an old witch.

"I wish so much for a little child. Can you tell me where I can get one?"

"That is quite simple," said the witch. "Pay me twelve shillings and I will help you."

"Thank you," said the woman, and gave the witch the twelve shillings for which she asked.

Then the witch gave the woman a barleycorn, saying, "this is not the grain which grows in the field, or which is given to the chickens to eat. Put it into a flower pot, and you shall see wh' you shall see."

The woman thanked her, and went home. She planted the barleycorn, and soon there grew up a fine flower, somewhat like a tulip; but its leaves were closed tightly and it looked like a big bud.

"This is a lovely flower," said the woman, and she kissed its scarlet and golden petals. As she did so, the flower opened with a pop! It was as splendid a tulip as anyone could see, but in the centre upon the green velvety stamens, there sat a little girl, delicate and exquisite, scarcely half a thumb's length in height. For this reason she was named Thumbelina.

A polished half walnut shell made her a cradle. The petals of purple violets were her mattresses, with a rose leaf for a coverlet. In the daytime, she played upon the table

on which the woman had placed a dish garlanded with flowers, whose stalks stood in water in the dish. A big tulip leaf floated on the water, and on this little Thumbelina would sit and row from side to side of the dish, with two white horse-hairs for oars. It was a pretty sight, and the tiny maid sang happily to herself.

One night, however, as she lay in her walnut bed, an old Toad crept through the window, in which one pane had been broken. The Toad was very ugly, cold and wet; it hopped down on to the table where Thumbelina lay sleeping beneath the rose leaf.

"She would make a pretty wife for my son," said the Toad, and picked up the walnut shell with Thumbelina and all, and hopped with it through the window down into the garden below.

Here was a broad brook. On its swampy banks the Toad lived with her son. Ugh! he was just as ugly and damp as his mother. "Croak! Croak! brek-kek-kek," he grunted, when he saw the dainty little maiden in the walnut shell.

"Hush, don't speak so loud, or she will wake up," said his mother. "She is as light as a bit of swan's down, and she might run away. Let us put her out in the brook upon one of the big water-lily leaves. It well seem like an island to her, for she is so small and light. She won't be able to escape, and then we will put the big room under the marsh in order, where you will live and keep house together."

On the brook grew many water-lilies, and the leaf which was the farthest out was also the biggest, and to this the old Toad bore Thumbelina in her bed.

The little maid woke early in the morning, and when she saw the wide expanse of water, as big as a huge sea to her, she began to cry bitterly. Meanwhile the old Toad was busy decorating the room beneath the marsh with rushes and weeds, and then she swam out with her ugly son. They asked Thumbelina to let them have her walnut bed so that it should go into the bridal chamber, and they took it away while Thumbelina sat alone upon the broad leaf and wept, for she did not want to go with the nasty Toads, and have the son for a husband. What was she to do?

But beneath the waters, the little fishes swimming to and fro had seen the Toad and her ugly son, and they stretched their heads out of the water to gaze upon the little mite who was to be given to the young toad. When they saw her, they were so sorry for her that they determined to try to help her. So they gathered round the green stalk of the water lily beneath the water, and gnawed it through, so that the leaf floated away down the stream, with Thumbelina safe and sound, saved from the Toad and her ugly son.

Thumbelina sailed along, past many towns, farther and farther until at last she had travelled right out of the country. Presently there came a big Cockchafer flying past, and when he saw her, he stopped, and clasping his claws around her flew with her into a tree. Poor little Thumbelina was terribly frightened, but the Cockchafer did not hurt her; he put her gently on one of the green leaves and seated himself beside her, then he fed her with the sweetest parts of the flowers, and declared her to be very pretty though not in the least as handsome as a cockchafer. All the other cockchafers who lived in the same tree came to visit Thumbelina, and they said, "Why, she has only two legs. She is not at all pretty."

"She has no feelers," said another cockchafer, while all the lady cockchafers cried that she was as ugly as a human being.

At last the first Cockchafer himself agreed with them, and they carried her *ç* *vn* again and set her upon a daisy. Poor Thumbelina wept bitterly to think she was so ugly that even the cockchafers would have nothing to do with her.

All through the summer she managed to live, although quite alone. She made herself a bed from blades of grass, she took honey from the flowers and dr nk of the dewdrops on the leaves. But at last came autumn and then winter. The birds who had sung their songs to her flew away, the trees and flowers shed their leaves and the shamrock, 'neath which she had lived, shriv^{ed} up. Thumbelina's silken clothes were torn and thin, and she was nearly frozen. When it began to snow, the flakes beat down heavily upon her frail little body, for she was but an inch long.

Now, close to the forest into which she had come, was a cornfield, and though there was no longer any corn, there was the short stubble, and through this she wandered till she came to the door of the Field Mouse. Here, beneath the stubble, the Mouse lived comfortably enough, her larder full of corn, her room protected from the cold winds and the snow outside.

Poor Thumbelina knocked timidly and begged the Field Mouse to spare her a little bit of barleycorn, for she had had nothing to eat for two days.

"You poor little mite," said the warm-hearted Field Mouse, "Come into my kitchen, and I will give you something to eat."

She was very pleased with Thumbelina, and said, "If you will keep my rooms clean and tidy, you may stay with me all through the winter, and you shall tell me stories of the great world outside."

Thumbelina was only too glad to stay, and worked hard to please the kind Field Mouse.

One day, her mistress said, "We shall have a visitor, my neighbour the Mole visits me once a week. He has great rooms, and a beautiful black velvet coat. Now, if you could win him for a husband you would be well cared for all your life."

But Thumbelina did not want the Mole, and though the Field Mouse told her how clever he was, and what a fine home he had, she kept very quiet, and only sang when the Field Mouse made her.

The Mole had fallen in love with her, and he dug a long passage through the earth from his house to that of the Field Mouse and told them to walk in it as much as they desired. He told them also not to be afraid of a dead bird which was lying in the passage; and when they went through, the Mole went with them, and when they reached the spot where the bird lay, he pushed up his nose and made a hole above, so that Thumbelina should not be afraid.

It was a swallow who had evidently died of cold, and Thumbelina, when the Mouse and the Mole had passed on, brushed the feathers aside and kissed closed eyelids.

At night, Thumbelina could not sleep, for thinking of the dead bird, so at last she got up, made a carpet of hay

and carried it out to the passage, spreading it over the swallow.

"Farewell, you pretty bird," she whispered. "Thanks to you for your beautiful song in the summer when the sun shone warmly on us." She laid the bird's head against her heart for a few minutes, unwilling to go away and leave him in the cold and dark.

But the Swallow was not dead, he was only frozen with cold and had sunk through the soft earth. Now the warmth from Thumbelina and the hay covering brought him back to life again. Thumbelina trembled, frightened, for the Swallow was very large. She just pressed the covering closer to him and went quickly back to her own tiny bed.

The next night, however, she crept out again, and now the Swallow was alive, though very weak for want of food. Thumbelina had brought a piece of decayed wood, and this gave a little spark of light.

"Thank you my pretty child," said the Swallow. "Thanks to you I am quite warm again, and soon perhaps I shall be strong enough to fly away to the warm sunshine."

"Oh," said Thumbelina, "it still snows and freezes. Stay here, and I will take care of you until the spring."

Then she brought the Swallow water in tiny drops, and crumbs of corn, and the Swallow stayed in the dark hole all the winter, unnoticed by the Mole or the Field Mouse, who thought him dead. Soon the spring came, and Thumbelina crept again into the passage and the Swallow pushed up his strong beak and made a hole just as the Mole had done. The sun shone in gloriously, and the Swallow asked if Thumbelina would go with him. She should sit on his back, and he would fly away into green woods. But the little girl knew that the Field Mouse would miss her, so she said, "No, I cannot leave the good Field Mouse."

"Farewell then, farewell, you dear pretty child," said the Swallow, and he flew forth into the golden sunshine.

Thumbelina looked after him with tears in her eyes, for she had grown very fond of the bird whose life she had saved.

She herself was not able to go forth into the sunlight. The corn which had been sown in the field above the

Mouse's home had grown up high and it formed a thick wood to the girl only an inch in height.

One day, the Field Mouse hustled up to her. "You are a very lucky girl, Thumbelina. Our neighbour the Mole has proposed for you, and you are betrothed to him. Now you must work to make new clothes."

So Thumbelina had to turn a tiny spindle, and the Mole hired four spiders to weave her wedding dress. Every evening he would come and pay a visit, and he would say that directly the summer was ended, when the sun would not shine so fiercely, he would keep his wedding day with Thumbelina.

But she did not like the Mole, and every day she would try to catch a glimpse of the blue sky as the tall corn stalks waved in the breeze. How much she wanted to see her dear Swallow again.

When the autumn came, Thumbelina's wedding clothes were ready.

"In four weeks, now, you shall have your wedding," said the Field Mouse; but Thumbelina cried, and said that she would not marry the old Mole.

"Nonsense!" cried the Field Mouse. "If you are obstinate, I will bite you. He is a very fine husband for you, and you should be thankful for your good fortune."

The wedding day arrived, and the Mole came to fetch Thumbelina. She would have to live with him deep under the ground and never see the sunshine again.

Poor Thumbelina did not dare refuse, but she asked one favour, to say good-bye to the Sun, and the Mole let her go, for he himself never came out into the daylight.

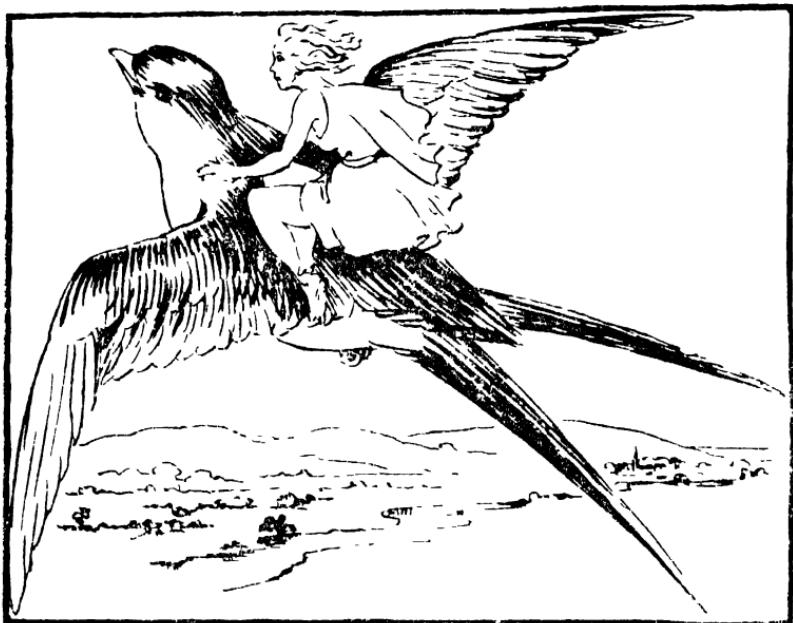
"Farewell, beautiful Sun," cried the little maid, stretching out her arms to the golden light. She walked out a few steps from the house, for now the corn had been cut again, and only the stubble was left. "Farewell! Greet the little Swallow if you see him again."

"Tweet, weet, tweet weet!" sounded a bird's voice, and Thumbelina, looking up, saw the Swallow. Overjoyed, Thumbelina told him how she was just going away to be married to the Mole, and would have to live deep under the earth where she would never see the sun again.

"The winter is coming again," said the Swallow, "and I am on my way to the warm countries. Come with me!"

You can sit on my back, then we will fly away from the Mole and the dark hole ; away, away where it is always summer and there are lovely flowers all round us. Come, fly with me, dear little Thumbelina, you to whom I owe my life when I lay frozen last year."

" Yes, I will go with you," cried Thumbelina, and she jumped on to the Swallow's back, binding herself to one of his feathers with her girdle. Then the Swallow flew



Then the Swallow flew up into the air.

up into the air over forest and over sea, high up, over mountains and rivers, till at last they came to the warm countries. There the sun shone gloriously. The most beautiful fruit, lemons, oranges and grapes hung on the trees, and the air was fragrant with myrtles and balsams.

Under the beautiful green trees by a blue lake stood an ancient palace, vines clustering round the marble pillars.

" This is my home," said the Swallow. " I will go and prepare the nest for you. Meanwhile, you shall wait in one of these lovely flowers and rest after the journey.

Thumbelina clapped her hands with joy, and waved

towards a marble pillar which had fallen to the ground and broken into pieces. Between them grew some beautiful white lilies. The swallow flew down with Thumbelina and set her upon the broad leaves. To her surprise, there sat a little man no bigger than herself, with a golden crown upon his head. He was the King of the Flowers.

"Oh, how handsome he is," whispered Thumbelina to the Swallow.

At first the King was a little frightened, for the bird was as big as an eagle to him, but when he saw Thumbelina, he clapped his hands. Here was the prettiest maiden he had ever seen. Taking off his golden crown, he placed it gently on her head, asked her name, and if she would be his wife and Queen of all the flowers.

Now this was a different mate from the ugly Toad, or the black Mole, and Thumbelina said "yes" to this charming king.

Then, out of every flower, came a lady or a lord, each one bearing a gift, but the best gift of all was a pair of gauzy white wings like those of the King himself. These were fastened to Thumbelina's shoulders, and now, she too could fly from flower to flower like a butterfly.

There was much rejoicing, and the Swallow sat above them in his nest to sing the marriage song, glad that he had been able to repay Thumbelina's goodness to him in the previous winter; but deep down in his heart he was a little sad, for he had grown to love her so much.

"You shall not be called Thumbelina," said the King of the Flowers. "Henceforth you shall be called Maia after the month of flowers."

And so Thumbelina lived happily ever after.

THE LITTLE FIR TREE

ONCE upon a time a pretty little Fir Tree grew in the depths of the forest. There was plenty of air and sunlight and many bigger fir trees as well as pines stood near by for company. But the little Fir Tree longed deeply to grow

bigger and did not care for the fresh air and warm sunlight or even notice the peasant children who ran about calling merrily to each other as they searched for wild strawberries.

Sometimes they would gather a whole basketful and sit down beside the Fir Tree to eat them and then they would say,

“ How small and pretty this one is ! ” but the Fir Tree did not like to hear that at all.

By the following year he had grown quite a big joint and the year after that he was taller still, for one can always tell how old a fir tree is by the number of rings on its trunk.

“ Oh ! ” he sighed, “ If only I were as big as the others so that I could spread my branches round and look out from my crown to the whole world. Then the birds would build their nests in my boughs and when the wind blew I could bend my head as proudly as the rest.”

So deeply did he long to be bigger that he could not enjoy the sunshine or the birds singing around him morning and evening when the sun’s rays reddened the sky and the clouds sailed over his head.

In the winter when the snow lay sparkling about him, deep and white, a hare would come springing along and leap right over the little tree and this made him very angry indeed. But time went by and when the third winter came round the Fir Tree had grown so much taller that the hare was obliged to run round it. But still he was not satisfied.

“ Oh ! ” he thought. “ To grow and grow bigger and older. That is the best thing in the world.”

Every autumn the woodcutters came to fell the larger trees and this year the little Fir Tree, now grown so much bigger, shivered with fear in all his branches when the stately trees around him fell with a crash to the ground. Then their branches would be cut off so that they looked quite thin and bare. He would hardly have recognized them when they were lifted up and piled on the waggons to be dragged away out of the wood.

Where were they going ? he would wonder ; what fate awaited them in the great world ?

In the spring, when the Swallows and the Storks arrived, the little Tree asked them, “ Do you know where the big trees went ? Did you not meet them ? ”

But the Swallows knew nothing of the matter and the Stork looked thoughtful and nodded his head before answering :

" Yes, I think I know. When I flew out of the land of Egypt I saw many new ships with great, high masts, which may have been these trees, for they smelt like Fir trees and they looked very stately."

" Oh ! I wish I were tall enough to go over the sea ! What does it look like ? "

" That would take too long to explain," replied the Stork as he flew away.

Then the Sunbeams tried to comfort the little tree as they touched his branches with gentle golden fingers.

" Be happy in your youth, little Tree," they cried. " Be glad of your fresh green growth and the young life within you."

The soft breezes too kissed the tree and the dew dropped tears upon it, but the Fir Tree could not understand that.

When Christmas-time drew near, some of the younger trees were felled, younger and smaller than the Fir Tree who longed so much to go away. These young trees were allowed to keep their branches and were laid upon the waggons, and horses pulled them away out of the forest.

" Where are they going ? " cried the Fir Tree. " They are no bigger than I am—indeed, some are smaller. Why do they keep their branches ? Where will they be taken ? "

" We know. We know that ! " twittered the Sparrows. " We looked in at the windows of the houses over there in the town. We saw where they go. They are dressed up in great style and splendour such as you never imagined ! They are planted right in the middle of the warm, bright rooms and hung round with the most beautiful things, toys and golden apples, cakes and sweets and lighted candles."

" And then ? " cried the Fir Tree trembling all through its branches, " What happens then ? "

" Well, we have not seen anything more than this but it was wonderful."

" Perhaps I too may one day meet with such a wondrous fate," cried the Fir Tree joyfully. " That is even greater than sailing across the sea. How I long to go too. For I am big and well-grown like those who were taken away. How I long to be on the waggon going to stand in the bright



Here the little man sat down, laughing.

rooms in beauty and grandeur! And then afterwards something even more wonderful than that may happen; who knows? There must indeed be grander things to come or else they would not dress me so beautifully; but what will it be? Something greater still! How I long and suffer; I scarcely know what is the matter with me!"

"Be happy with us," cried the Air and the Sunlight. "Be glad of your fresh youth here in the forest."

But the Fir Tree could not rejoice at all, only grew and grew, winter and summer, green and darker green until the people who passed it in the forest said, "Look! that's a beautiful tree!" and at next Christmas-time it was the very first to be felled. The axe cut deep into its heart and it fell to the ground with a deep sigh. It felt faint with the pain and could not feel any of the expected happiness at going away, for this was home where it had grown up and it knew that never again would it see the dear friends around it, birds and flowers, trees and bushes. The parting was a sad one after all.

But it began to feel better when it was unloaded in a yard with the other trees and heard a man say, "This is a fine one; we will have this one!"

Then two servants in livery came and carried the Fir Tree away into a great drawing-room where the walls were hung with gay pictures and silk-covered chairs stood round and the children played with picture-books and toys upon a soft rug by the fire.

The Fir Tree was put into a big tub full of sand; but this was hung with green cloth so that the tub did not show, and then the ladies came to deck it out with little bags of sweets and brightly coloured toys and candles while the little tree thrilled with excitement.

At last it was all finished and the very topmost branch was ornamented with a tinsel star. It was indeed a splendid sight!

"To-night," everyone said, "It will shine beautifully!"

"Oh!" thought the Fir Tree, "How I wish it were evening already! I wonder whether the trees will come out of the forest to look at me? Or will the sparrows peep at me through the windows? Shall I stand here all the winter and grow?"

At last the candles were lighted and then what a brilliant sight was our little Fir Tree. He trembled with pride so that one of the candles fell and set light to a green branch, scorching it and alarming the company who hastily put out the flame.

But now the Tree dared not even tremble lest he set himself alight again, and this was terribly hard to bear for he was quite bewildered with all this splendour and light.

Then the doors were thrown open and in rushed all the children so eagerly that they nearly overturned the Tree.

For a minute the little ones stood quite silently gazing at it while the elder folk came in more quietly ; then they shouted with glee and danced joyfully round it and one toy after another was pulled from it till the candles burned down to the branches and went out and then the children were allowed to do as they liked with the Christmas Tree.

How they rushed in upon it and tore the figs and apples from it roughly so that, had it not been fastened to the ceiling by the top branch where the star glittered, it would have been pulled down.

The children danced about the room with their toys for a while and then shouted for a story as they pulled a little fat man towards the Tree. Here the little man sat down, laughing. "Now we shall be in the forest," he said, "and the Tree may have the pleasure of hearing the story."

So the little man told the story of Humpty Dumpty who fell down, while the Fir Tree stood and listened in wonder ; for never had the bird told quite such a story as that, and he believed it all because such a nice man told it. When it was over, he looked forward to being decked out again next evening with toys and candles, and golden fruit.

"To-morrow I will not tremble," he thought, "but I shall be happy in all my splendour and hear another story, perhaps."

He stood all night in silent, happy thought, and in the morning the servants came in. "Ah ! now my grandeur will begin again," thought the Tree ; but he was dragged out of the room and upstairs to a lark attic where no daylight could be seen.

"Why have they brought me here ?" wondered the Tree. "What is going to happen now ?" And he leaned against the wall and thought and thought while the

days went by and no one came near him except to put away some boxes in a corner.

"I suppose it is winter outside," thought the tree. "The ground is hard and snow-covered so that they cannot plant me and I am to be sheltered here until the spring comes. How good of them! But if only it were not so dark and lonely here! Not even a little hare to talk to me. It was pleasant there in the forest; yes, even when the hare sprang right over me, though I did not like it then. But it is very lonely here!"

"Peep! peep!" said a little Mouse; and then another little one came and they both crept into the branches of the Fir Tree.

"Where do you come from, you old fir tree?" asked the little Mice. "Tell us about the things you have seen! Do you know the most beautiful spot on earth where the cheeses lie on the shelf and the hams hang from the ceiling?"

"I don't know that place," said the Fir Tree, "but I know the forest where the sun shines and the birds sing." And it told the little Mice all about its youth, while they listened in wonder and said at last, "What a lot of lovely things you have seen. How happy you must have been!"

"I?" said the Fir Tree; and it thought about the forest and all the things it had been telling the little Mice. "Yes! I suppose those were really very happy times."

Then he told the little Mice about Christmas Eve, when he had been decorated with sweets and toys and lit up by candles, and the Mice listened spellbound.

"What splendid stories you can tell!" they said; and next night they came again with four more little Mice to hear what other stories the Tree could tell. Somehow the more the Fir Tree told them the more he could remember about the forest and the fairy story the little fat man had told the children about a Princess and Humpty Dumpty who fell down, till the little Mice were ready to jump over each other with excitement; and the Tree thought, "Who knows? Perhaps I may marry a Princess," and he remembered a pretty little Birch Tree which had grown near him in the forest.

Next night some more Mice and two big Rats appeared to hear his stories, but the Rats did not think so much of them as the little Mice had done.

"Don't you know any stories about bacon and tallow-candles and hams in the storeroom?" they asked.

"No," said the Fir Tree; so the Rats went back to their nests and the little Mice did not come again either; and the Fir Tree sighed with loneliness and wished someone would come and take him out of this dark and lonely place.

At last, one day, some servants came into the attic and cleared away the boxes, threw the Fir Tree roughly on the floor and dragged him away downstairs where the daylight shone.

"Ah! now life is beginning once more for me," he thought, as he was pulled and pushed about down in the courtyard. There was a garden close to the courtyard and the Fir Tree thought joyfully, "Now I shall live happily," and he spread out his branches to the sun and the air, but alas! they were yellow and withered and the corner in which he lay was overgrown with weeds and nettles. The tinsel star was still fastened upon his topmost branch and glittered in the sunlight.

Some of the children who had played around him on Christmas Eve were in the courtyard and, when they saw the Fir Tree, the youngest one ran up and pulled off the tinsel star.

"Look what is sticking to the old fir tree!" cried the child as he trod the branches underfoot until they broke off and crumbled.

And the Tree looked at the flowers blooming in the garden and then at his broken branches, withered, yellow and ugly in the bright sunlight, and he thought regretfully of his fresh green youth in the forest.

"Past and gone," he lamented sadly. "Oh! how I wish I had been happy when I lived in the Sun amidst the green trees of the forest!—Past and gone."

And then a servant came and chopped the Fir Tree into pieces and made a big bundle of them. This was pushed into the fire under the copper where the pieces of the poor little Fir Tree burned and sighed and thought of the summer days in the forest and the many starlit nights there. "Past and gone," he murmured sadly as the pieces fell apart in white spark-lit ashes, while the children played with the star which the Fir Tree had worn at the splendid party on Christmas Eve.

THE BUTTERFLY

ONCE upon a time the Butterfly desired a bride, and as he himself was so handsome, naturally he wished to choose a very pretty one from among the flowers in the garden.

He gazed all round the flower-beds, and every flower sat quietly on her stem with downcast head, and waited to be chosen by the butterfly for his mate.

But there were a great many flowers, and the choice seemed to become very tiring, especially as the butterfly did not want to take too much trouble. So he flew off first of all to the daisies. The French people call these flowers Marguerites, and they say that a Marguerite can tell the future, so that lovers pick off the white petals and ask of each one as they do so, some question concerning their loved ones. "Am I loved heartily?" "Very much; Very little?" "Not at all?" and such like.

The butterfly then came to Marguerite to enquire, but he did not pluck her petals; he kissed each of them tenderly.

"Darling Marguerite-Daisy," he said. "You are the wisest woman amongst the flowers. Tell me, shall I get the right bride, and which one shall I choose. If you can tell me that I will fly straight to her and ask her to become my wife."

But Marguerite remained silent. She was angry that he had called her a "woman", when she was but a girl, for there is a big difference in the terms. The Butterfly asked her a second and even a third time, and as she remained dumb and would not answer him, he did not wait, but flew away to choose for himself.

It was Spring time, and the crocus and snowdrop were still blooming.

"They are very pretty," thought the Butterfly. "Dainty little maids; but perhaps just a little too young, they are but schoolgirls." Like all young men, he looked first for an older girl with whom to fall in love.

Then he flew off to the Anemones. But these were a little too bitter; the violet he thought too sentimental, the lime blossoms were very small, and besides they had too many relations. He considered the apple-blossoms,

they looked like white roses, but he thought they bloom to-day and fall to-morrow beneath the first wind that blows. His marriage would be but a very short one.

The Pea Blossom seemed the best of the flowers. She was white and red ; graceful and delicate, and belonged also to the domestic maidens who look handsome, while at the same time are useful in the kitchen. He was just about to make his offer when, close by her, he saw a pod at whose end hung a withered flower.

“Who is that ?” he asked.

“That is my sister,” replied the Pea Blossom.

“Oh, indeed, and you will get to look like her.”

He flew away quite upset, feeling that he had had a narrow escape.

Then he came to the honeysuckle blooming from the hedge. But there was a big family of them, and they all had long faces and sallow complexions. No, he would not choose one from this family.

But which one was he to choose ? The Spring went by, and even Summer drew towards its close ; now it was Autumn, and still he could not make his choice of a bride.

Now the flowers appeared in most gorgeous hues, but in vain ; they had lost the fresh sweetness and fragrance of youth. There is very little of the daintiness and innocence of youth in the brilliantly attired Chrysanthemums and Dahlias, and at last the Butterfly looked at the Mint close to the earth.

This plant has no ‘ossom, but its leaves are so full of fragrance as to make them one great flower in itself.

“I will choose her,” said the Butterfly, and he made her an offer, asking her to become his bride.

But the Mint stood silent and stiff, though she listened to him. She was an Old Maid, and did not want to change her state.

“Friendship, if you please, but nothing more,” she said. “I am old, and you are old too, and we may well live for one another, but as to marrying, no, we don’t want to appear ridiculous at our time of life.”

And so the Butterfly had no wife at all. He had been too long making his choice, and had to become what we call an old bachelor. Now it was late in autumn, with rain and cloudy weather. The wind was cold as it blew through

the willow-trees and made them creak. It was no longer weather to be flying about in summer clothes, nor to be in the open air. The Butterfly by chance had flown into a room where there was a fire in the stove, and it felt like summer heat.

"After all," he said, "It is not enough merely to live; one wants freedom as well as sunshine and a flower."

The sun was shining, and he flew against the window pane. Here a little boy saw him, and I am sorry to say he stuck a pin through him and put him in a box.

"Now, I too, am perched on a stalk, like the flowers," said the Butterfly drowsily. "Perhaps that is what it feels like to be married. I am better off after all."

Consoling himself with this thought, the Butterfly fell fast asleep.

THE STORKS

ONCE upon a time there stood a Stork's nest on the last house of a small village. In it sat the Mother-Stork with her four young ones, stretching out their heads with the black, sharp-pointed beaks which had not yet turned red.

Not far off stood Father-Stork, stiff and upright, all alone on the ridge of the roof with one leg drawn up. He was standing guard over Mother-Stork and her nest, for he thought, "It must look rather grand for my wife to have a sentry standing by her nest!"

In the street below a crowd of children were playing. When one of them caught sight of the Storks they began to shout together the old verses about the birds, which went like this:—

*"Stork, stork, fly away;
Don't stand on one leg to-day.
The mother-stork is on her nest,
Where she rocks her young to rest.

The first one will be hanged,
The second will be beaten.
The third one will be shot,
And the last one will be eaten."*

"Just listen to those boys!" cried the little Storks.
"They are saying we shall all be killed."

"Don't take any notice," answered the Mother-Stork.
"If you don't listen to it they will soon stop!"

But the boys went on shouting and jeering at the Storks; all except one boy whose name was Peter. He declared that it was a sin and a shame to jeer at them and he would not join in with the song at all.

The Mother-Stork tried to comfort her little ones.

"Don't pay any attention to them," she said; "see how quietly your father stands and on only one leg, too!"

"We are frightened," said the young Storks as they drew back as far as they could into the nest.

Every day when the children came out to play, they sang their rude verses and mocked at the Storks; and every day the Mother-Stork indignantly denied to the frightened young ones that there was any truth in the song.

"You are not to believe a word of it," she cried. "Soon I will teach you to fly and then we shall all fly out into the meadows and visit the Frogs. All the Frogs will sing, 'Croak! Croak!' and bow down before us, and then we shall eat them up."

"And what then?" asked the little Storks.

"After that all the Storks in the country meet and the autumn flying exercises start. You must all learn to fly very well by then, for whoever cannot pass the flying test will be run through by the General's long beak and killed."

"So it is true what the boys are singing, and we shall be killed."

"Now, now! listen to me and not to them," replied the Mother-Stork. "Pay great attention when I teach you, and after the General has reviewed us all we shall fly away to the warm countries far across the sea. We shall fly to Egypt where there are three great covered buildings of stone towering up to the sky. These are the Pyramids and they are older than any Stork can even imagine. In that country there is a wide river that runs out of its bed when we get there, and all the country round is turned to mud and one walks about in the mud all day, eating frogs."

"Oh!" cried the young Storks, "won't that be fine!"

"Yes! It is lovely there! And while we are walking about eating all day in the warm mud, it is so cold here that

there is not a green leaf to be found, and the clouds freeze to pieces and fall down in little white rags!"

By this the Mother-Stork meant snow, for that was the only way she could explain it.

"Will the naughty boys freeze to pieces too?" asked the little Storks, eagerly.

"No, they do not freeze to pieces but they have to sit in rooms under a roof, cowering over fires indoors while we fly about in the warm sunshine of the foreign country where the flowers grow."

Every day Father-Stork would come with frogs and other stork-dainties which he had found for them and the nestlings grew rapidly until they could stand upright in the nest and look out at the world below. Father-Stork would perform all kinds of feats to please them, laying his head back on his tail and clapping with his beak till they laughed with delight, and then he would tell them stories about the marshes.

"Now, children," said Mother-Stork one day, "It's time you all learned to fly. Come along!" and the four young ones had to go out on to the ridge of the roof, balancing themselves with their wings and tottering with fright.

"Now, look at me," cried the Mother-Stork. "Hold up your heads like this! Place your feet like mine and then use your wings! One, two! One, two! That's the way to get on in the world."

Then she flew a little way and the young Storks made an effort to do the same, but the only result was a clumsy leap and bump! there they lay on the roof again.

"I don't care about flying," cried one little Stork as he crept back into the nest again. "I don't care if I can't go to the warm country."

"What!" cried the Mother-Stork, "Do you want to stay here and freeze to death and let the boys kill and eat you? Very well, I'll call them."

"Oh, no!" said the young Stork as he hopped out on to the roof with the others.

By the third day they could fly a little and began to soar and hover in the air until they tumbled down quite tired out.

Soon the boys came out to play and began to shout at them.

" Shall we fly down and peck them ? " asked the young Storks.

" No, " answered the Mother-bird, " leave them alone. It's far more important for you to listen to me than to them. Now watch ! One, two, three ! and we fly round to the right. One, two, three ! now we fly to the left round the chimney and back. There ! that was very good indeed. To-morrow we will all fly to the marsh ! There will be



Practising every day.

several nice Stork families there and you must show them all that my children are the nicest of all."

" But can't we go down and peck the naughty boys ? " asked the young Storks.

" No, let them shout as much as they like. You will soon be flying through the clouds to the land of the Pyramids while they shiver in the cold."

" Still, I wish we could punish the rude boys, " the young Storks whispered amongst themselves.

The boy who had started all the teasing and shouting was quite a little fellow, hardly more than six years old, but

the young Storks could not judge how old he might be and thought him a great big creature who ought to be punished. They grew so angry that at last their mother had to promise them that they should punish him, though not until the day before they were going to fly away.

"We must first see how you pass the flying test," she said. "If you fly badly and the General stabs you with his beak, then the boys will be right after all."

"Very well, you shall see," promised the young Storks, and they took all possible care, practising every day and flying so lightly and well that it was a pleasure to watch them.

When the autumn came, all the Storks began to gather for the great flying test before they started to make the long journey. They had to show how well they could fly over forests and mountains and the young Storks did their part so well that the General gave them a good mark, saying, "Well done with frogs and snakes!" which is the highest praise a General Stork can give and means that the young ones may now eat all the frogs and snakes they can find, which they did.

"Now let us have our revenge on the naughty boys," cried the youngsters.

"Very well, so you shall," replied the Mother-Stork. "This is what I have thought of as the best punishment. I know the pond in Fairyland where all the little mortal babies lie and dream until we go to fetch them home to their parents. They are such sweet little babies that all parents long for one and all the little children want one for a sister or a brother. So we will fly to that pond and bring a baby each for all the little children who have not sung the rude songs or made fun of the Storks."

"But the naughty, ugly boy who jeered at us," screamed the young Storks angrily, "what shall we do to him?"

"There is a little dead child in that pond," answered the Mother-Stork. "We will bring that one to his house and he will cry with disappointment. While the good boy who said that it was a shame to laugh at us; do you remember him? We will bring him two, a sister and a brother as well. His name is Peter so you shall all be called Peter after him."

And so they were, for in this town all the Storks are called Peter to this day.

IB AND CHRISTINE

ONCE upon a time, near the river Gudenau in Jutland, there was a forest which extended from its banks far into the country where a great tract of land rose like a wall through the wood. In its midst stood a farmhouse ; the land all round it was very poor sandy soil, but after some years of care and cultivation, the people who lived in it managed to make quite a good living. Jeppe-Jans, the farmer, cultivated his fields in summer ; but when winter came, he made wooden shoes from the forest trees that were felled or fell in the winter gales, and from the small pieces they carved spoons and toys that sold well in the town.

The only child of the farmer and his wife was little Ib, and when he had grown to seven years old, he would sit and watch the wood being carved, and he himself would try to cut a stick, even though he cut his fingers. But one day he did make two pieces of wood into two little wooden shoes, and these he wanted to give to little Christine. She was the daughter of the boatman who plied between the forest and the estate of Silkeborg, and sometimes even to the little town of Randers, carrying firewood. As Christine's mother had died years ago, he was obliged to take the little girl with him, and sometimes when he had to go into the town and 'ay over night, he would leave little Christine, who was a year younger than Ib, with the farmer and his wife.

Now Ib had never been on the river, so one day the boatman asked if he could go with them and, permission being given, he took Ib back with him over the heath to his home.

Next morning, the two children were placed on a pile of firewood in the boat, and given whortle-berries and bread to eat during the journey. The current was with them and the boat was rowed swiftly along, past reeds and water plants, and old oaks whose bare gnarled branches bent down over the banks like old men who had turned up their sleeves and were showing their knotty arms. It was a splendid excursion, and when at last they came to the

great eel-weir where the water rushed through the flood-gates, Ib and Christine thought they had never seen so fine a sight. At Silkeborg, the firewood was unloaded, and the boatman bought a basket of eels and a young sucking-pig to take back with him. Then they started on the return journey. The wind was in their favour, and when the sails had been hoisted, it was like harnessing two horses to the boat.

At last they arrived at a point in the river where lived the assistant-boatman, and after mooring the boat and bidding the two children to sit still, the men went ashore.

But the children had got tired of sitting still, so they got up and went to the stern of the boat where they found the basket with the eels and the little sucking-pig. This they must needs take out, and then the boat lurched a little and the basket fell into the water and was carried down the stream.

Frightened at this, Ib jumped ashore and ran along the bank, to see if he could draw it back, while Christine sprang after him, crying, "Take me with you!"

In a few moments the children were deep in the forest and could not see either the boat or the river bank.

"Follow me," said Ib. "We shall find the house over yonder."

But the house was not to be seen, and the children ran this way and that way, till at last they were entirely lost. Christine cried, and although they ate some whortle-berries, they were hungry and tired out. As darkness drew on, they threw themselves down on the dry ground and fell fast asleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when they awoke. They were cold and stiff, for the ground had not proved a soft bed by any means. But they thought, if they searched again, they would find a house and perhaps Ib's own home. The forest was very beautiful with nut bushes covered with the finest nuts, and the children picked and cracked many of them.

All at once, out of the thicket, stepped a tall gypsy woman, with brown face and shining black hair beneath her scarlet hood.

She looked so friendly, and drew forth from her pocket three nuts. Ib asked if she would give them to him, and

she said they were wishing nuts and full of the most wonderful gifts.

"Is there a carriage with a pair of horses in this nut?" he asked.

"Yes, a golden carriage!" said the gypsy.

"Then, give me that nut!" said little Christine.

Ib gave it to her, and the gypsy tied it in her handkerchief so that she might not lose it.

"Is there a pretty neckerchief in this one?" asked Ib.

"Yes," said the gypsy, "There are ten neckerchiefs in it and stockings and a hat with a veil."

"Then I will have that one also," said Christine.

And Ib gave her the second nut. But the third nut was small and dark.

"You can keep that one," said Christine, "although it is a pretty one, too."

"What is in it?" asked Ib.

"The best of all things for you," replied the gypsy, and Ib held the little nut very tightly.

Promising to lead them home, the gypsy bade them follow her, and took them in an entirely new direction, into a wild wood path, and here they met the forest bailiff who knew Ib.

With his help and after thanking the gypsy, who turned back into the forest, the two children were soon taken home where Ib's parents and Christine's father had been very anxious about them.

Christine returned to her home, and in the evening, Ib thought of the little nut. Placing it in the crack of the door, he shut it gently, and broke the shell. It was empty save for a tiny pinch of rich black earth.

"Yes, that's what I thought," said Ib. "How could the very best things be found in this tiny nut? Christine will find hers just as empty."

* * * * *

Now came the winter. Ib was sent away to school, and several years passed by.

One day the boatman, visiting Ib's parents, told them that Christine was going into service with a rich innkeeper's family at Herning, many miles away, who had promised, if she did well, that they would adopt her as their own daughter.

Ib, who was home on a visit, took leave of Christine, and they said they would be betrothed some day. The girl showed Ib the two nuts, which she had never cracked, and she told him she still had the little wooden shoes, and she meant to marry him some day.

So they parted, and Ib went on with his schooling till his father died, when he came back to look after the fields and carve wooden shoes. Only seldom did he get news of Christine, for she was well off with the innkeeper; but one day she wrote to her father telling him how they had given her many new clothes.

One spring day, there came a knock at the door of the farm, and there was the boatman and Christine. She had come over to spend the day with her father, and had called to see her old playmate. There she stood in her pretty clothes, and Ib felt uncouth in his working clothes and could not utter a word.

But Christine did all the talking, and presently the two wandered forth into the borders of the forest where they had got lost as children. Here Ib got over his shyness, and reminded Christine that they were betrothed.

"If you have not become too grand, Christine, will you consent to our being married some day? We will wait a little while longer if you like."

"Yes, we must wait awhile, Ib," she replied. He kissed her, but she said, "Yes, I think I love you, but I want to wait awhile."

With that they parted once more. Ib told the boatman that they were betrothed, and the good man was quite willing, but nothing more was said, and another year passed away.

One day the boatman came again, and after much hesitation he told Ib how the son of the innkeeper had been home on a visit and had fallen in love with Christine. The parents also wanted him to marry her, for they had grown very fond of the girl; she was both good and pretty. Christine was only hesitating because she did not want to hurt Ib's feelings.

Ib turned white and stood shaking. Then he said, "Christine must not refuse so fine an offer."

"Then, will you write her a few lines so that she may know I have truly seen you?" said the boatman.

Ib obeyed, and the next day the boatman returned with a letter telling Christine not to think of Ib, but to follow the road which would lead her to fortune. He released her from any bond between them and only begged her to be happy.

A few months later, Christine was taken to Copenhagen, where her bridegroom lived and worked, and here she was married. Ib heard nothing more save that she would be very rich, and drive her own carriage.

Ib thought then of the gypsy woman's nuts. Of the two which he had given to Christine, certainly one seemed to have brought her fine clothes, and the other a carriage and gold to pay for it. But what of his nut, which had contained only black earth. "The best of all," had said the gypsy. Yes, perhaps that was coming true too; in the black earth he would find the only happiness left for him.

So once again years passed, his mother died, and so did the old innkeeper and his wife, leaving their property to Christine's husband. Yes, indeed, could Christine have her fine clothes and her golden coach as the gypsy had said. Two more long years passed, and then the boatman had a letter from Christine, but this time it was to tell him that she was in poverty; her husband had spent and lost all their money.

Meanwhile Ib guided his plough over the fields, till one day it struck against something hard. Ib stooped and picked up what seemed to be a great black stone, but he found that it was not stone, but metal. When he had cleansed it from the black earth, he found it was made of gold, and was a huge armlet. He had disturbed a Hun's grave, and this was part of the early treasure buried in it.

He took his find to the judges, and in time Ib was paid a big sum of money. "You have found the best thing you could find in the earth," said the judge.

"The best thing! And found in the black earth," thought Ib. "Well, if that is so, the gypsy was right in what she promised for me too."

To get his reward, Ib had to go to Copenhagen, and to him who had but once or twice passed beyond the river that rolled by his home, this seemed like a voyage across the ocean.

But he arrived at the city, and was paid the value of the

gold he had found ; a large sum to him—six hundred pounds.

Ib wandered about the Capital till it was time for the boat to sail again, and on the last day, he found himself in the suburb of Christianshaven, and in one of the poor streets.

Ib could not see anyone to ask his way back, except a little child outside one of the wretched houses, and she was crying bitterly. Ib stopped short and asked her what was the matter, but the child only looked at him. As the light of the street lamp fell on her tear-stained face, he started back, for it looked just as if his tiny playmate, little Christine, stood before him, as he remembered her when they had played in the forest.

He followed the little girl into the house and up the dark narrow staircase into an attic room beneath the roof. There was no light, and from the corner came the sound of moans as from one in pain.

Ib struck a match. A woman, the mother of the little girl, was on a wretched bed and evidently close to death. "Can I help you ?" asked Ib. "Can I fetch help ?"

Then, bending over the pillow, he saw it was Christine, his Christine of the heath.

Poor Christine, she had come to the end of the road which was to have led her to fortune. Fine dresses, golden coach, all had gone. Her husband was dead, only the little child was left.

"I am dying," she moaned. "What is to become of my little child alone in the world ?"

Ib struck another match and lit a piece of candle standing on an old chair. He gazed from the dying Christine to the child. The woman gazed at him ; her eyes opened wide. Did she recognise him ? Who can say ? He never knew, for her lips were closed for ever.

Once more back in the forest by the river Gudenau, Ib ploughed his fields and kept the little farmhouse fresh and trim. Within it the turf blazed up cheerily, the sunlight seemed even brighter, for with him dwelt a little child. Ib was both father and mother, and the past had vanished like a bad dream.

Ib had indeed the best of all from the black earth, and a little Christine of his own after all.

THE PUPPET SHOWMAN

I WAS once making a sea journey, and on board the steamer was an elderly man, with such a jolly face that he seemed to be one of the happiest men in the world. Indeed he declared that he was the very happiest man. It seemed that he was a Dane, a travelling showman. He carried all his company with him in a large box, for his shows were played by puppets, and he was master of a puppet-show. He told me that he had gained happiness through a lecturer of the Polytechnic, and this was his story:

I was staying in the little town of Slagelse, and I had arranged to give a show in the big hall of the Post House, I had a splendid audience, one almost entirely of children, and how they enjoyed the performance! All at once a man in black, of student-like appearance, entered the Hall and sat down. He laughed aloud, and seemed to enjoy it as much as the children. This was quite an unusual spectator, and I asked who he was. I learned that he was a lecturer from the Polytechnic Institution in Copenhagen, sent to give scientific lectures in the provinces.

My show ended punctually at eight o'clock, so that the youngsters should not be kept up late, and at nine o'clock the lecturer commenced, giving simple experiments to illustrate his talk ; and now we had changed places. I was a member of his audience.

His lecture appeared very wonderful to me, and much of it was beyond my understanding. Still, it made me think that these experiments would have appeared like miracles or even like black magic in the Middle Ages.

The next night I gave another performance at the Hall, and again the lecturer was present, and I did my very best to impress him with my show ; to please him was my one aim. That I succeeded was evident for, after the show was over and all the puppets had made their bow before the curtain, the Polytechnic lecturer invited me to his room to have a glass of wine ; he praised my comedies, I admired his science talk, and we were both equally pleased. But I had the best of it, for I was master of every action and word of my puppetism while there were many of his experiments for which he could not give me an explanation ; for instance, why does a piece of iron, that falls through a spiral, become

magnetic? It is as if a spirit falls upon it, but whence does it come? Perhaps it is the same with human beings; they tumble through the spiral of this world and the spirit falls on them and there stands a Napoleon, or a Shakespeare.

"The whole world is a miracle in itself," said the young lecturer, "only we are so accustomed to it, that we take the miracles as a matter of course."

He went on explaining various things till I said that if I were not such an old man I would commence learning all over again, and look upon the sunny side of life, though really I am one of the happiest of men; but I admit I have one wish. I should like to become a real theatrical manager, the director of a real company of men and women instead of painted dolls.

"I see," the lecturer said thoughtfully. "You would like to have your puppets come to life and become real actors."

I agreed that this was my heart's desire, and we clinked our wine-glasses together.

The room seemed full of light, somehow, and a kind of light beamed in the eyes of the young man. It reminded me of the old stories when the gods in their eternal youth came down on the earth and visited mortals. I said this to him, and he smiled—I could have sworn that he was indeed one of the ancient Gods. Anyhow, he declared that I should have my wish. We drank to my success and clinked our glasses once more. Then he packed all my puppets into their box, bound it on to my back, and put me through a spiral that suddenly appeared.

I felt myself falling—falling, and there I was lying on the floor of the room. The lecturer had disappeared.

But out of the box sprang my whole company of puppets; they were all great artists, they said, and I was their Director. All was ready for the next show; and the whole company wanted to speak to me as well as to the public.

The Dancing Lady declared the house would fall down if she did not keep standing on one leg, for she was a great genius. The lady who acted as the Queen insisted on being treated as a real Queen whether on or off the stage. The man who only had to deliver a letter gave himself just as many airs and graces as the principal lover. The hero would not play any parts unless he was on the stage practically all the time, so as to get all the applause. The

prima donna would only sing in a red light for she declared that her complexion could not stand a blue one. It was just like a nest of hornets buzzing round me. My head whirled ; I could not make myself heard. How sorry I felt that I had not got them all into the box again, and I told them so, and said they were nothing but a set of puppets.

At this they set on me and killed me, I found myself lying on my bed in my room, though how I had got there I could not say, nor what had become of the Polytechnic lecturer. The moonlight flooded the room, the puppet box stood open, and the dolls lay in confusion on the floor, just painted wooden puppets. I jumped off the bed, and into the box they went helter skelter ; some on their heads, some on their feet. I shut down the lid and sat upon it.

"Now you'll stay there," I said. "Never will I wish you to become alive again."

Once more I was the happiest man in the world. The Polytechnic student had cured me of wanting a real live company of actors and actresses. I was as happy as a king, and I went to sleep still sitting on the box.

I did not wake until noon on the following day. I was still sitting on the box, happy and conscious that my wish had been a foolish one. I enquired for the lecturer, but he had left.

From that time I have been the happiest of men. I am a stage director, but none of my company grumble, or put on airs. They do what I want, they please me and my public. I play whatever com' ly I like and no one grumbles at my choice. I play many of the good old plays and the children like them as their parents did thirty years ago. I am contented and there is nothing like being contented to make one happy.

THE RED SHOES

THERE was once a little girl, who was pretty but not very strong, and so poor that she always went about barefoot during the summer. In winter she wore shoes, but they were made of wood and were very large and heavy, so that her little ankles became very sore.

In the same village lived an old mother shoemaker, and out of some pieces of red cloth she made a pair of shoes for the girl. They were rather clumsy, but fitted well. The woman gave them to the girl, whose name was Karen.

The first time Karen wore the red shoes was on the day of her mother's funeral. They were not really suitable for mourning, but she had no others, and so she walked in them bare-legged behind her mother's poor coffin.

Just then a large old carriage rolled by, with a large old lady sitting in it. The lady looked at the little girl and felt sorry for her, and she said to the priest, "Give the little girl to me, and I shall take care of her." Karen thought the lady said this because of the red shoes, but the lady said they were ugly and had them burnt. Karen was then dressed very neatly, and she was taught to read and to sew.

One day the Queen went on a journey through this part of the country, taking her little daughter, the Princess, with her. All the people, with Karen among them, crowded in front of the palace to see them, and the little Princess stood at one of the windows, dressed all in white. She wore neither a train nor a gold crown, but on her feet had a pair of lovely red morocco shoes. They were much more beautiful than the pair the old mother shoemaker had made for Karen. Indeed, thought Karen, nothing in the world could compare with those red shoes.

When Karen was old enough to be confirmed she was given a new dress and was measured by a rich old shoemaker for a pair of new shoes. In the shoemaker's shop there were many large glass cases full of dainty shoes and shining leather boots. They looked beautiful to Karen; but the old lady's sight was not very good, and so she found little pleasure in looking at them. Among the shoes was one pair of red ones, just like the shoes the Princess had worn. The shoemaker said that they had been made for the daughter of a Count, but had not fitted her.

"They are made of patent leather," said the old lady.
"Look how they shine!"

"Yes, they shine wonderfully," said Karen. She tried them on, and they fitted her, so they were bought; but the old lady did not know that they were red, for she would never have allowed Karen to wear red shoes for her confirmation. But that is what Karen did. Everyone looked

at her feet, and as she walked up the church towards the chancel it seemed as if even the figures of the old sculptures and paintings, with their stiff collars and long black robes, had their eyes fixed upon her red shoes. She thought only of her shoes when the Priest laid his hand on her head, and spoke of Holy Baptism and of her covenant with God. The organ gave out its solemn notes, the sweet singing of the children joined with that of the choir, and Karen still thought only of her red shoes.

By the afternoon the old lady had been told that Karen's shoes were red, and she was very cross. She told Karen that they were most unsuitable, and that whenever she went to church in future she must wear black shoes, even if they were old.

On the next Sunday Karen was to go to her first Communion. She looked at the black shoes, and she looked at the red shoes ; she looked again at the black shoes, and at the red shoes ; and in the end she put on the red shoes.

It was a lovely sunny day. Karen and the old lady went by way of the corn-fields, and the path was dusty. Standing at the church door was an old soldier, leaning on a crutch. He had a long beard, not white but rather reddish. He bowed low, almost to the ground, and asked the old lady if he might dust her shoes. Then Karen put out her little foot as well. "What lovely dancing shoes !" said the old soldier. "Take care not to let them slip off when you are dancing." As he said this he tapped the shoes with his hand. Then the old lady gave the soldier a coin, and went with Karen into the church.

Everybody in the church looked at Karen's red shoes, and all the figures looked too. When Karen knelt before the altar and received the Holy Communion, her thoughts were still only of the red shoes, which seemed to float before her eyes. She forgot to join in the hymn of praise, and forgot to repeat the Lord's Prayer.

At last everyone left the church, and the old lady got into her carriage. Karen was lifting her foot to follow, when the old soldier, who was still standing by the door, said, "Look, what pretty dancing shoes !" Then Karen could not help it, she simply had to take a few dancing steps. Once she had begun, her feet went on dancing, as if the shoes had a strange power over them. She danced

all the way round the church. She could not stop dancing. The coachman had to run after her, and he took hold of her and lifted her into the carriage ; but still her feet went on dancing, and so she kicked the old lady cruelly. At last the shoes were taken off, and her feet had some rest.

After this the shoes were put away in a press, but Karen could not help going to look at them from time to time.

The old lady became ill, and the doctor said she would not live. She needed careful nursing, and no one was better suited for this than Karen. But there was to be a grand ball in the town, and Karen was invited. She looked at the old lady, who was dying ; she looked at the red shoes. She put them on—there was no harm in that ; but then she went to the ball, and began to dance. Then, when she wanted to dance to the right, the shoes danced to the left ; when she wanted to go up the room, the shoes went down the room—and down the stairs, through the streets, and out through the gate of the town. On she had to dance, right into a dark forest. Something shone above the trees, and she thought it was the moon ; but it was the old soldier with the red beard. He nodded and said, "Look, what pretty dancing shoes ! "

Very frightened, she tried to throw off the red shoes, but they would not come off. She tore off her stockings, but her shoes seemed to have grown on to her feet. Away she had to dance, over fields and meadows, in rain and sunshine. She danced day and night, and at night it was terrible. She danced to the open church door, where she saw an angel, in long white robes, with wings reaching from his shoulders to the ground. His face was stern, and in his hand he held a broad, shining sword.

"Dance you shall !" he said. "You shall dance in your red shoes, till you are pale and cold, and your skin shrivels up and you are a skeleton ! You shall dance from door to door, and wherever proud, vain children live, you shall knock so that they may see you and fear ! You shall dance——"

"Mercy !" cried Karen—but she did not hear the angel's answer, for the shoes carried her through the gate, into the fields, by roads and paths, and always she had to dance.

One morning she danced past a door she knew well. She heard hymn-singing from inside, and a coffin covered

with flowers was carried out. Then she knew the old lady was dead, and felt forsaken by everyone.

Still she danced on, even through the darkness of the nights. The shoes carried her over briars and thorns, until her feet were torn and bleeding. On she danced, away over the heath, to a small lonely house. She knew that the executioner lived here, and she tapped with her fingers against the window-pane, calling :

"Come out! Come out! I cannot come in to you, for I am dancing."

The executioner answered, "Surely you cannot know who I am! I cut off the heads of the wicked, and my axe is very sharp."

"Don't cut off my head," said Karen, "for then I would be unable to repent of my sin. But please cut off my feet with the red shoes."

Then she confessed her sin, and the executioner cut off her feet with the red shoes; but the shoes danced right away with those little feet, into the depths of the forest.

Then the executioner made her a pair of wooden feet, and cut down some branches to serve as crutches, and taught her the psalm which is always sung by penitents. Then Karen kissed the hand that had wielded the axe, and went away over the heath.

"Now, surely, I have suffered enough through those red shoes," she thought. "I shall go to church, so that people may see me." Then she went as fast as possible to the church door, but when she drew near to it the red shoes danced before her, and she was frightened and turned away again.

All through the week she suffered bitterly and shed many tears. When Sunday came, however, she said to herself, "Now I have surely suffered long enough. I think I am just as good as many of the people who are sitting in church holding their heads so high!" So, with new courage, she went there again; but she had not gone farther than the gate of the churchyard before she saw the red shoes dancing in front of her. More terrified than ever, again she turned back and more than ever regretted her sin.

Karen now went to the parson's house, and begged to be given work there. She did not want any wages, she said, if only she could have a roof over her head and a home

with good people. The parson's wife felt sorry for her, and took her into her service ; and Karen was very grateful and worked very hard. Every evening she sat still, listening to the parson as he read aloud from the Bible.

When Sunday came again all the parson's family went to church, and they asked Karen if she would go with them ; but she sighed sadly, and looked at her crutches with tears in her eyes. When they had all gone she went into her own little room, which was only big enough to hold a bed and a chair, and sat down with her prayer-book in her hand. While she was humbly reading it, the wind bore the notes of the organ from the church into the room, and she raised her face to Heaven and cried, " O God, help me ! "

Then, suddenly, the sun shone brightly round her, and behold ! right before her stood the Angel in the white robes whom she had seen at the church door on that terrible night before. He was no longer wielding the sharp, cruel sword in his hand, but instead he held a beautiful green branch covered with roses. With this he touched the ceiling ; and at once the ceiling rose to a great height, and on the spot where the Angel had touched it appeared a shining golden star. Then the Angel touched the walls ; and the room widened out, and Karen saw the organ and the sculptures and paintings and all the congregation sitting in their richly carved seats and singing the psalms. For the very church itself had come home to the poor little girl in her narrow little room—or, rather, the room had somehow grown into the church. Karen found herself seated in the company of the parson's family, and when the psalm came to an end they looked up and said, " You did well to come here, after all, Karen."

" It was the mercy of God ! " she said.

Then the organ sounded again, and the children's voices rang sweetly through the choir. The warm, bright sunshine streamed down through the windows, on to where Karen was sitting. Her heart was so full of sunshine, and of peace, and of joy, that it broke. Her soul flew on a sunbeam up to Heaven, where she was greeted with not a word of reproach—and not a word about the red shoes